



Association of College Counselors in Independent Schools

ACCIS User's Guide to SAT Score Choice

Background

The College Board announced in June 2008 that beginning in March 2009, under a new policy called Score Choice, students would have the option of submitting to colleges their SAT Reasoning Test results only from the specific test dates of the student's choice. The College Board announced at the same time that, under Score Choice, students would have the option of choosing which of their SAT Subject Test scores to send to colleges.

For many years before making this change, The College Board kept a cumulative record of students' SAT and SAT Subject Test results, and when students requested that their scores be sent to colleges, The College Board sent the scores from all of their SAT and SAT Subject Tests. From 1993 to 2002, The College Board offered SAT II Score Choice for the results from those tests, which are now known as SAT Subject Tests. That version of Score Choice was not available for the SAT I, which has until recently been known as the SAT Reasoning Test, and is now referred to by The College Board as simply the SAT. By contrast, ACT has long maintained that students "own" their ACT scores, and that students must specify which single or multiple test dates should be included when they ask ACT to send their test scores to colleges.

The response to Score Choice from students, secondary schools, and colleges has ranged widely. To be sure, the introduction of Score Choice has focused attention on how colleges use test scores in the admission process. The most controversial aspect of Score Choice may be that one of the five options that The College Board has offered to colleges as a way of disclosing their score-use practices for admission decisions is one called "All Scores Required for Review." Should students comply and "send everything" to those colleges, their admission offices will receive a cumulative record of students' results on all SAT and SAT Subject Tests, as they have in past years.

Carnegie Mellon, Georgetown, Pomona, Stanford, and Yale are among the institutions planning to make their policy "All Scores Required for Review." Not just for those institutions, but for all colleges and universities, The College Board plans to provide information on each institution's test use policy under Score Choice, and to offer corresponding recommendations to students on which scores to send. The College Board has asked colleges and universities to clarify what their Score Choice policy will be, and has pledged to update that information at <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/sat-score-use-practices-list.pdf> (.)

Students may well face an ethical dilemma when responding to questions on college applications about their testing experience, for they may want to "send everything" to some colleges while releasing only certain scores to others. Students will be repeatedly reminded to comply with the testing requirements of the colleges to which they apply. However, under Score Choice, students will have the final authority to determine which of their SAT scores by test date, and which of their SAT Subject Test scores by test, they want to send to which colleges.

Recommendations

Students who plan to apply to colleges and universities that require the ACT, SAT, or SAT Subject Tests should confer with their school counselors to plan which test(s) to take, and to discuss a calendar for taking them during their junior and/or senior years. Students should remember that many colleges will “cherry pick” or “super score” their best results on separate test sections from multiple attempts at any college entrance test, and that this common practice is in the best interest of most students. Many colleges seek to bolster their testing profiles by using, for admission, research, and reporting purposes, the strongest test scores submitted by students applying for admission.

Students should respond honestly and ethically to questions from colleges about what tests they have taken, and they should follow the Score Choice practices of the colleges to which they plan to apply. Students should not allow the perceived qualities, advantages, or opportunities of Score Choice to affect their plans to take the ACT, SAT, and/or SAT Subject Tests a reasonable number of times, nor to plan additional testing or preparation for the tests beyond what’s recommended by their counselors. Students should know that some colleges may take a dim view of applications from students who have taken the SAT or ACT more than three times, and that such “over testing” may not be well received by colleges in the admissions process.

The sound advice long offered to students by school counselors about college entrance testing—that they should prepare wisely, take only the test(s) needed and do so a reasonable number of times, understand that their school record is more important than their college entrance test results at many colleges, and keep their test results in proper perspective—continues to be valid.