

“What Does Test Optional Mean?”

What Is Test-Optional?

If a college or university has a test-optional admissions policy, that means they allow all or some applicants to decide whether to submit SAT or ACT® scores as part of their application. It doesn't mean that schools aren't interested in seeing all applicants' performance and potential—but if a student doesn't submit their scores, it won't be considered in the application review.

In a recent survey, representatives from test-optional colleges and universities reported that, on average, close to 80% of their applicants choose to submit test scores.

Understanding test-optional policies can help you make informed decisions about whether to take the SAT, the ACT, or both. The most important point is that policies vary widely. Be sure to read each college's policy carefully so you understand what you need to do to qualify for admission, scholarships, financial aid, etc.

Variations in Test-Optional Policies

Here are some possible variations in test score policies:

Example 1: Test-optional admissions policy for some

At some colleges, if your GPA or class rank meets the minimum requirements, you can decide not to submit SAT or ACT scores. Some applicants, like homeschooled or international students, are required to submit scores, regardless of GPA.

A rare variation of this is “test flexible.” This means you may be able to take a test other than the SAT or ACT, such as SAT Subject Tests™ or AP Exams, to meet the school's requirements for admission. Even rarer with only 2 colleges in the U.S. having this policy is “test blind”, which means the college won't look at test scores even if they are submitted.

Example 2: Test-optional admissions policy for all

In some cases, the college allows students to decide for themselves whether to submit test scores. Applicants are told, in essence, “if you think your scores are an accurate representation of your ability, feel free to submit them. If you feel they're not, don't.”

Example 3: Test optional for admissions, but required for enrollment or scholarships

Some colleges that are test-optional for admissions require SAT or ACT scores for other uses, such as academic counseling and placement, or for institutional research. Students who don't submit their scores as part of their applications will be required to do so before arriving on campus.

Remember: Many schools that don't require scores for admission still consider them when awarding merit scholarships. When in doubt, check with the school.

For more information and frequently asked questions, visit the College Board Blog:

<https://blog.collegeboard.org/author/college-board>