

Standardized Tests

Standardized tests are given to assess student progress and to make sure that our students are scoring appropriately compared to other students their age across the nation. CCA also uses standardized test scores to locate any gaps in our curriculum or pedagogy as long as the nature of those gaps are not in conflict with our biblical worldview.

CCA's breakdown of standardized testing during Jr./Sr. High School is as follows:

12th grade – College Board's SAT, College Entrance Exam.

- Students must register and pay for this exam online through [College Board's website](#).
- CCA is scheduled as a test center two times a year in October and March.
- The SAT is a Digital Exam. It is recommended that students use their own device, but CCA can provide Chromebooks for students that take the exam at CCA.
- Typically, students take the SAT once during the 2nd Semester of their 11th grade year and again in the 1st Semester of their 12th grade year.
- CCA receives and evaluates our students' SAT scores.
- Exams are offered throughout the school year at various testing sites. More information can be found on College Board's [Dates and Deadlines website page](#).
- The SAT is optional; however, most students take this exam at least once.

11th grade – College Board's SAT, College Entrance Exam.

- Students must register and pay for this exam online through [College Board's website](#).
- CCA is scheduled as a test center two times a year in October and March.
- The SAT is a Digital Exam. It is recommended that students use their own device, but CCA can provide Chromebooks for students that take the exam at CCA.
- Typically, students take the SAT once during the 2nd Semester of their 11th grade year and again in the 1st Semester of their 12th grade year.
- CCA receives and evaluates our students' SAT scores.
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- The SAT is optional; however, most students take this exam at least once.

11th grade – College Board’s PSAT/NMSQT, College Entrance Exam - OPTIONAL

- 11th grade students may choose to take the PSAT/NMSQT exam to participate the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.
- This exam is given during the school day in October.
- Students must sign up for this exam through CCA.

10th grade – College Board’s PSAT 10, College Entrance Exam - REQUIRED

- 10th grade students are REQUIRED to take the PSAT 10 exam.
- CCA will pay for all our 10th grade students to take this exam.
- 10th grade students will automatically be registered for this exam.
- This exam is given during the school day in March.
- The PSAT is a Digital Exam. CCA will provide Chromebooks for students since they are taking the exam at CCA during the regular school day.

9th grade – College Board’s PSAT 8/9, College Entrance Exam - REQUIRED

- 9th grade students are REQUIRED to take the PSAT 8/9 exam.
- CCA will pay for all our 9th grade students to take this exam.
- 9th grade students will automatically be registered for this exam.
- The PSAT is a Digital Exam. CCA will provide Chromebooks for students since they are taking the exam at CCA during the regular school day.
- This exam is called the PSAT 8/9, but we are only requiring our 9th grade to take this exam.

7th & 8th grade – No Standardized Tests Given

If you have any questions regarding Standardized Tests, please call the Jr./Sr. High School Office at 215-969-2404 or email Mrs. Reber, our Academic/College & Career school counselor, at treber@ccphilly.org.

Article: *What is the PSAT and What to Know About the Exam* by U.S. News & World Report provides further information on what the PSAT is and how students benefit by taking the exams. See article below:

(U.S. News & World Report)

What the PSAT Is and What to Know About the Exam

The PSAT is good preparation for the SAT and may yield college scholarships for top scorers.

By [Josh Moody](#)

Oct. 6, 2021, at 9:29 a.m.

What to Know About the PSAT

High enough marks on the PSAT/NMSQT as a junior can help a student land a National Merit Scholarship.

The SAT may be a household name, but high school students should also familiarize themselves with the PSAT, or Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test.

The exam comes in three forms: the PSAT 8/9, the PSAT/NMSQT and the PSAT 10. The PSAT 10 is the same test as the PSAT/NMSQT, though students take these exams at different times of year. The PSAT 8/9 acts as a baseline for [college](#) readiness, according to the College Board, the test-maker, while the other two allow "check-in on student progress."

The PSAT is "a slightly shorter and slightly easier version of a test kids will be taking their junior and senior year," explains Jed Applerouth, founder and president of Georgia-based Applerouth Tutoring Services. "It's a warm-up. It gives students and parents guidance in terms of how they'll perform on the SAT."

What Is the PSAT?

So, what does that alphabet soup mean, anyway?

The [PSAT 8/9](#) is designated for students in the eighth and ninth grades and the PSAT 10 is for sophomores. The PSAT/NMSQT stands for the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, which students take as a sophomore or junior. High enough marks on the PSAT/NMSQT as a junior can help a student land a National Merit Scholarship, which can mean [big bucks](#) for college.

"So many students take this test because they believe that they will be able to get the score that will make them [eligible for the scholarship](#)," Chris Lele, principal curriculum manager for Magoosh, a California-based online test prep company, wrote in an email.

But earning a National Merit Scholarship is no easy task. According to 2021 numbers from the College Board, more than 2 million students took the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10 in the 2020-2021 school year. Of those test-takers, around 7,500 will be chosen to receive a National Merit Scholarship or corporate- or college-sponsored merit award in 2022.

What Types of Merit Scholarships Are Awarded?

The approximately 7,500 Merit Scholarships are split across three categories. First is the National Merit \$2,500 Scholarship, with the winners decided by college admissions officers and high school counselors. This award is a one-time payment of \$2,500.

Next are about 1,000 corporate-sponsored merit and special scholarships, decided by National Merit Scholarship Corp. staff, with the amount and duration of the award varying by corporate sponsor and ranging up to \$10,000 per year. Finally, there are around 4,000 renewable college-sponsored merit scholarships, with winners decided by the individual colleges and amounts ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 a year.

What Is the Value of the PSAT?

Students can gauge the value of the PSAT in two ways, experts say. One is as a pathway to one of these scholarships and the other is as test prep for the SAT, which is broadly used as a [college admissions exam](#). Taking a trial run with the PSAT is one way to get ready for the SAT.

"For many students – depending on how states deliver state assessments – this may be the first time they are timed on an exam," says Kathleen Plott, director of advanced academic services at Klein Independent School District in Texas.

Experts say that generally, the PSAT is a low-stakes test unless a student is aiming for a National Merit \$2,500 Scholarship or one of the special scholarships.

Colleges don't use the PSAT as part of [admissions criteria](#), so taking the test can be a good way to identify shortcomings in a particular subject or to work out testing anxiety, test prep experts say.

The PSAT and SAT are similar, which makes taking the PSAT a useful exercise for SAT preparation.

"The SAT is quite a bit [longer and more difficult](#), but essentially tests the exact same thing," Lele says, adding that "it's as though someone took a majority of the easy and medium questions on the SAT and put them in one section – that's basically the PSAT."

How Is the PSAT Timed?

The length varies by test, with two hours and 25 minutes for the PSAT 8/9 and two hours and 45 minutes for the PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT.

For the PSAT 8/9, the test is broken down into 55 minutes for reading, 30 minutes for writing and language, and 60 minutes for math, according to the College Board website. Across those components, there are 42 questions or tasks for reading, 40 for writing and language, and 38 for math.

On the PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT, 60 minutes is allotted for reading, 35 for writing and language, and 70 for math. These test-takers will see 47 questions or tasks in reading, 44 in writing and language, and 48 in math.

How Is the PSAT Scored?

All versions of the PSAT are scored based on two sections: evidence-based reading and writing, and math.

Though similar, score ranges differ by versions of the PSAT. For the PSAT 8/9, the score range is 240-1440. The range for the PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT comes in a bit higher at 320-1520. On all three exams, the score is calculated by combining the results from the reading and writing section and the math portion.

For all versions of the PSAT, the College Board has established benchmarks. Students in the eighth grade taking the PSAT 8/9 should earn a 390 on the reading and writing section and a 430 on math. On the same test, students in the ninth grade should earn a 410 in reading and writing and a 450 in math. According to the College Board, those scores "predict a 75% likelihood of achieving a C or higher in related first-semester, credit-bearing college courses."

For the PSAT 10, benchmarks are set at 430 on reading and writing and 480 on math for 10th grade students. For the PSAT/NMSQT, those numbers are 460 for reading and writing and 510 for math, or 30 points higher in each.

When weighing their scores on the PSAT, Plott says, students should ask themselves, "How have I grown from the first time I took (the test), whether I was in eighth or ninth grade, and how am I moving along the path toward college readiness?"

While two section scores comprise the final result for the PSAT, the topics tested span a variety of subjects. According to the College Board website, students need a knowledge of

history, social studies, science and math. And they should be able to demonstrate analytical and problem-solving skills alongside the ability to read, write and reason.

The College Board website also notes that points are earned for every correct question answered, meaning there's no penalty for guessing. Test-takers should try to answer every question since since there's "no advantage to leaving them blank," the websites states.

What Is a Good PSAT Score?

When aiming for a particular score, students should think about their motivations, experts say, whether that's trying to practice for the SAT or to earn a coveted and competitive scholarship.

On the PSAT 8/9, 835 was the mean score for eighth grade test-takers, compared with 892 for their ninth grade peers, according to 2020-2021 data from the College Board. The mean score on the PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT was 959 for sophomores and 1044 for juniors.

Scores can reveal strengths and weaknesses, Plott says, and make students aware of deficiencies they can address before the SAT. Pinpointing the exact score needed to earn a National Merit Scholarship is tricky, however, because it varies. There's no set number from year to year.

According to the National Merit Scholarship Corp. website, the 50,000 qualifiers for the award are identified using a selection index that is "calculated by doubling the sum of the Reading, Writing and Language, and Math Test scores." Those qualifiers are ultimately pared down to National Merit Scholars and other special scholarship winners.

Recipients are selected from among the highest-scoring PSAT/NMSQT test-takers in each state who also have qualifying SAT or ACT scores, meaning the competition is stiff.

"There's so little room for error that you just have to crush the test," Applerouth says of those chasing [scholarship](#) dreams.

How to Prepare for the PSAT

Since the PSAT is similar to the SAT, experts recommend using the same test prep materials for all PSAT exams.

"I'd say whatever [SAT strategies](#) are out there, these apply to the PSAT," Lele says. "I think the only exception is pacing advice, since that is often framed around the SAT section and the time allotted for that section. Pacing strategies for the PSAT would need to take into account the number of questions on each section and the time allowed per question."

Magoosh and Applerouth are among numerous companies that offer paid tutoring for students preparing for the PSAT, SAT and other exams. Free options also exist, such as Khan Academy, which multiple test prep experts cite as a valuable resource for the exam.

Plott emphasizes using [official resources](#) available on the College Board website or through the affiliated [Khan Academy](#). She urges students to spend time identifying their weaknesses and sharpening them as they prepare for the PSAT and eventually the SAT.

Experts also encourage students to pay close attention to pacing to ensure they are finishing practice tests on time; to find patterns in the questions they missed on practice tests; and to boost their knowledge gaps in those areas.

While students register for the SAT through the College Board, the PSAT works differently. Students interested in taking the PSAT exams can do so directly through their high school and should check with counselors on registration details, which may vary by grade level.

Link to full article: <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/what-the-psat-is-and-what-to-know-about-the-exam#:~:text=Save,or%20Preliminary%20Scholastic%20Aptitude%20Test.>