

STANDARDIZED TESTING REVIEW

THE PSAT

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Purpose

PSAT/NMSQT stands for Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.

The PSAT is a standardized test that provides both sophomores and juniors at SI with formalized practice for the SAT. ALL students at SI take the PSAT in the Fall of both sophomore and junior year during the school day on October 14th, 2009 (National Test Date).

For juniors, completion of the PSAT also suffices as a qualifier for the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) scholarship programs. Read below for more details on the NMSC.

The PSAT measures three skill sets

1. Critical Reading
2. Math Problem-Solving
3. Writing (The essay portion of the SAT is not a part of the PSAT)

These are analytical skills that students have developed over many years, both in and out of school. The PSAT does not require students to recall specific facts from their classes.

Reasons for Taking the PSAT/NMSQT (as a sophomore and a junior)

Preparation & Experience with the SAT

The PSAT gives students the opportunity for better familiarity with the SAT through formalized testing in a timed setting. The same types of questions may be found on the SAT with the exception of the Writing section (which is not included on the PSAT).

Sophomores are encouraged to consider this an opportunity to experience the PSAT for the first time, as that is the sole intention for this testing session.

Score Report & Test Booklet

The SI Counseling Department will mail test results home upon receipt from The College Board. This report gives students feedback on specific strengths and weaknesses on the test as well as a complete listing of the student's specific answers along with all of the correct answers on from the test. The student's test booklet will also be returned so that students may begin to plan for individualized preparation for the SAT.

Student Search Service

Students may elect to receive information from colleges when students check "yes" to Student Search Service, found on the PSAT answer sheet at the start of the test. For many students the Student Search Service becomes the primary method by which colleges and universities identify prospective students.

National Merit Scholarship Competition—for Juniors Only

Juniors are automatically entered in a scholarship competition sponsored by the NMSC. Finalists and Special Scholarships are awarded to high performing participants who meet a corporate sponsor's eligibility criteria. National Merit recognition is also beneficial for the college admission process as it identifies high scoring students on the PSAT. For more information, go to the National Merit Scholarship Corporation website at: www.nationalmerit.org.

Preparing for the PSAT

The best way for a student to prepare is by engaging in their education. In addition, students may utilize some resources to assist them with increasing their comfort level with the pace and content of the test prior to PSAT testing day.

A few suggestions

Prior to the test, students should review the PSAT for content and pace. The goal is to familiarize students with the instructions for each section, actual test questions and specific strategies for taking this test.

Sophomores and Juniors will be given a practice booklet early in the Fall. Information about the test may also be found on the College Board website: www.collegeboard.com. Students may also log onto their Family Connection account and use 'Method Test Preparation', a free online SAT/ACT practice site.

Faculty at SI may also help students prepare. Students should consult with their teachers if they have questions.

PSAT Scoring

The PSAT is scored by section: Critical Reading, Math and Writing, on a scale of 20-80. To translate to a possible SAT Reasoning Test score, add a '0' at the end of each PSAT score (Critical Reading, Math, Writing) received.

For Example: 60 (PSAT) = 600 (SAT) (per section)

The Score Report also provides a 'Selection Index' which is the sum of the Critical Reading, Math and Writing scores. National Merit uses this number (60-240) to determine their qualifying score for the next round of the scholarship process.

The specific index score varies from year to year, but is typically above 200. Students who qualify are either named 'Commended Students or move to the next round of the competition as 'Semifinalists.'

Score Reports

PSAT scores are shared with the student, parents and their counselor. Colleges do not see PSAT scores nor are they considered for college admissions.

PSAT scores will be mailed home once received by St. Ignatius College Preparatory. This typically happens when we return from Christmas Break in January. A letter of explanation is also included.

College Board also gives students access to a planning tool called 'My College QuickStart.' Students may review PSAT score details, questions, answers and explanations to each question and access suggestions to prepare for the SAT based on the PSAT results. Go to www.collegeboard.com/quick and enter the code on the Student Score Report.