

Amherst Regional High School
College Admission Tests (SAT Reasoning Tests, SAT Subject Tests, TOEFL, ACT)

Almost all four year colleges and some programs at community colleges require some kind of standardized admission testing. Most ARHS students take the SAT, once in the spring of the junior year and again the next fall. The ACT is an alternative. It includes a science section in addition to the reading, math and writing.

You can register for SAT tests online at www.collegeboard.com. Register for the ACT at www.actstudent.org. (You will need your social security number, date of birth and a major credit card or a fee waiver.) Registration booklets and free sample tests for both are also available in the Guidance Office.

Students with Individualized Educational Plans or 504 plans who use extended time testing or other accommodations here at school and who wish to have these accommodations on SAT Reasoning or SAT Subject Tests need to apply to the College Board for these accommodations. They should see their guidance counselor or special education liaison well in advance of registration deadlines for special applications and registration forms if they have not had PSAT or SAT accommodations in the past. The College Board makes the final determination regarding accommodations. This can sometimes take several months, so families should begin the application process as early as possible.

Fee waivers are available for SAT and ACT testing and college applications to anyone who is eligible for the free/reduced price lunch program. See the Guidance secretaries for details.

Typically, Juniors take the SAT Reasoning Test at **one** of the test sessions in the spring (March, May or June). Students who wish to take SAT Subject tests in the spring usually take the SAT Reasoning test in March and the Subject tests in May or June (It is not possible to take both the SAT Reasoning and Subject tests on the same day.)

Highly competitive colleges require SAT Reasoning tests and two or three SAT Subject tests. It is possible to take up to three Subject tests on one day. Some students prefer to spread these tests over two different test sessions.

The most commonly chosen Subject tests by ARHS students are Math (level IC or IIC), literature, foreign language or a science (Molecular Biology, Chemistry or Physics). It is wise to check the requirements of colleges in the junior year to ensure that the required tests are taken. Many highly selective colleges require two or even three subject tests. Students who are considering a major in engineering should consider taking a Subject test in chemistry or physics in their junior year, as a physical science Subject test is required by a few highly selective engineering programs.

In the fall, there will be SAT test sessions in October, November and December. Many seniors retake the SAT Reasoning test in the fall. SAT Subject tests are rarely repeated by ARHS students.

Once a student has taken an SAT Reasoning or Subject test, a cumulative record is started at ETS in Princeton. From then on, all scores are reported to colleges when students send scores. You **cannot** send only the best SAT Reasoning or Subject test scores to colleges. (PSATs are not part of the cumulative records.) Most juniors should not list any colleges on their test registration

forms. List them when you take the SAT as a senior and when you know more about which colleges you will apply to. You will get four reports free and will have to pay a fee for each additional final report that is sent. Study, practice, coaching and strategy work may or may not improve SAT scores. Courses, books and software are available for this purpose. Given some self-discipline, such “work” does not have to be expensive. The ARHS Guidance Office Library has books available for loan. Samples of SAT tests are available in the Guidance Office as well.

ACT: The American College Testing Program (ACT) offers college admission tests called the ACT assessment and ACT assessment plus Writing. Some, but not all, ARHS students do better on the ACT. Web registration and explanations of the tests are available at www.actstudent.org. Paper registration forms are available in guidance. The ACT includes a composite score and subscores in English, math, reading, science, and writing (if you choose the ACT plus Writing). If you take the ACT more than once, you can choose the score that you would prefer to send to your colleges. In addition to the spring dates, the ACT will be offered in September (NY only), October and December. Students who are considering filing early decision/early action or University of California applications (due in November of the senior year) should have all “first-round” testing completed in the spring.

TOEFL: The Test of English as a Foreign Language is a test for non-native English speakers. Some colleges require students whose native language is not English to take it in addition to the SAT or ACT, depending on their level of English proficiency. Because testing requirements differ from college to college, students whose first language is not English should always pay attention to website information for international students, even if they have a green card or are U.S. citizens. Discuss whether you should take this test with the college advisor and the ELL teachers before registering for it, best in the fall of twelfth grade, because it is costly, and fee waivers cover only half. The Internet-based TOEFL (IBT) is given at various sites in Massachusetts, Holyoke being the closest. Registration materials and information about the test are available online at www.toefl.org.

TIPS FOR RESEARCHING COLLEGES

- Think about what kind of environment you want to learn in after leaving high school. Be open to places you are just hearing about for the first time. It’s best to look for best fit. Don’t be deterred by sticker price at this point. It’s often greatly reduced by financial aid.
- Investigate different kinds of colleges – liberal arts, universities, single sex, more and less competitive, open enrollment community, urban, suburban and rural
- With this in mind, do Choices Planner or College Board searches
- College websites provide a LOT of information. Read THEM, including blogs, if available
- Visit in person for best information and personal impressions
- Attend classes. Are they at the right level for you?
- Have interviews. They are usually informational, not evaluative and can usually only help you.
- Make appointments with people in departments that interest you, including professors and coaches. If you make a good impression, they might just talk to the Admissions Office about you!
- Meet with financial aid officials, if indicated, at colleges you like.
- Identify and write down features that you like and do not like.
- Search again for colleges that have features you like. Read and visit some more!