Cracking the SAT and ACT: Using the Growth Mindset and Research out of Stanford to Improve Scores

Session C.7

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Ten Testing Takeaways

1. Identify college goals
2. Determine current level
3. Plan for obstacles
4. Adopt a Growth Mindset
5. The SAT/ACT are not High School tests
6. Focus on critical thinking and test strategy
7. Plan for SAT Subject Tests
8. Build the right testing timeline
9. Find the right prep option
10. Learn how to evaluate tutors
What we’re about to cover

- Why these tests matter
- How to help your students succeed
- What is your role, and what is your student’s role

- 37 charts and graphs covering admissions data and score distributions for the tests
- Details on every question type on the SAT & ACT
1. IDENTIFY YOUR STUDENT’S GOALS TO GET A SENSE FOR THE SCORES THEY NEED
Find out what scores your child will need

- Google search “UC Berkeley student score profile”
- Look for interquartile scores on the SAT and ACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>25th percentile</th>
<th>75th percentile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>1490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. DETERMINE YOUR STUDENT’S CURRENT TESTING LEVEL
3. THERE WILL BE OBSTACLES ON THE PATH
PLAN FOR THEM
How to build a great plan

WOOP

WISH  OUTCOME  OBSTACLES  PLAN
4. DON'T LET YOUR STUDENT'S CURRENT LEVEL OF ABILITY BE AN OBSTACLE.
While these exams are not like regular high school exams, students can prepare for them!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Content covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typical HS Test</td>
<td>~ 1-2 hours</td>
<td>Up to 9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT/ACT</td>
<td>~ 4 hours</td>
<td>Up to 9 years</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. NOT THE TEST YOUR STUDENT IS USED TO
## Comparing the SAT and ACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SAT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>3 hours 50 minutes</td>
<td>3 hours 35 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>400 – 1600</td>
<td>1 – 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sections</td>
<td>Math, Evidenced based reading and writing</td>
<td>Math, Science, Reading, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculator</td>
<td>Calculator allowed for 2/3 of math section</td>
<td>Calculator allowed for entire math section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Focus</td>
<td>Heavy on Algebra and Data Analysis</td>
<td>Broad range of topics from Pre-Algebra to Trig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty</td>
<td>Questions make use of misdirection / traps</td>
<td>Questions are more straight forward</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With a Growth Mindset ... ability and intelligence increase and improve
Ability and Effort

Praise Ability

Test 2: 53%
Test 1: 58%

Praise Effort

Test 2: 75%
The Myth of Effortless Talent
High Ability
Low Effort

Low Ability
High Effort
Effort vs. Ability?

Effort = Ability
Identifying a Fixed Mindset

- Avoids Challenges.
- Gives up easily.
- Sees effort as fruitless, or worse!
- Ignores useful negative feedback.
- Feels threatened by the success of others.
- Says “I’m just not good at that.”
Hallmarks of a Growth Mindset

• Embraces Challenge.
• Persists in the face of setbacks.
• Sees effort as the path to mastery.
• Learns from criticism.
• Finds lessons and inspiration in the success of others.
• Says “I’m just not good at that yet, but I can get better.”
The Test Zone

- The SAT & ACT are designed to be long, distracting, and boring
- Getting in the Test Zone means taking complete control of yourself and the exam
- Surroundings, state of mind, physical state
Pacing on the SAT & ACT

- Students often struggle with pacing
- **Don’t rush** to answer every question
- **Don’t worry** about timing for each question
6. SUCCESS COMES FROM STRATEGIES AND HONING ACADEMIC SKILLS
Read → Read for meaning
Write → Communicate your ideas
Do Math → Analyze and apply
The power of your two-track mind

his financial support. She got her way, taking possession of the child Arthur, but his mother went mad and died, and his father went abroad and later died too. Meanwhile, Gilbert Clennam has heard of the existence of Arthur's true mother, all he has heard is that she was a girl whom his nephew had loved, but had abandoned in order to marry as his uncle had wished, and that she had subsequently mad and died. He has felt remorse at this, and as a kind of recompense has left a codicil to his will, a thousand guineas to the youngest daughter of the man who for some time acted as patron to this girl (i.e. Arthur's true mother); or, if that man had no daughter, to his brother's youngest daughter.

his man who had acted as patron to Arthur's mother was Frederick Dorrit and helped her, in her youth, to be a professional singer. But Frederick Dorrit had no daughter. The legacy therefore became due to the youngest daughter of her: that is to say, to Little Dorrit herself.

Arthur's father had dictated the codicil making this change in his will to
Choosing between the SAT & ACT
How *not* to choose between the tests

“We were originally thinking SAT, but then Noah’s admissions advisor told us left-handed students born on Tuesdays do better on the ACT.”
7. BUILD A TESTING TIMELINE THAT FITS YOUR STUDENT’S LIFE
### Testing Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
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<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
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<tbody>
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#### Sophomore
- Talk to your counselor about taking the PSAT and/or ACT Aspire – it's a great way to see how you'll perform on the official SAT/ACT!
- Stay focused on your grades.
- Consider preparing for the SAT/ACT, especially if you have a busy junior year ahead or are hoping to be a recruited athlete.

#### Junior
- Sign up for the PSAT – not only will it help gauge your ability on the official test, it can qualify you for a National Merit Scholarship.
- Most students take the SAT/ACT in the spring (March, April, or May). Start your preparation now to feel confident on test day.
- Review your official scores with a Revolution Prep Academic Advisor.
- Last chance to prepare for the SAT/ACT in your junior year!
- Take 2-3 SAT Subject Tests if you're applying to very selective colleges.

#### Senior
- Last chance to take the SAT/ACT! Check with your counselor to be absolutely sure of which test dates colleges will accept.
- Time to get in! Colleges will let you know their admission
8. THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO PREPARE; FIND THE ONE THAT FITS YOUR STUDENT

Prepare on your own
Take a group course
Work with a tutor
Your child can prepare on their own:

- The right choice for a small portion of students
- Diligence, commitment, time, motivation
- Least expensive option
Your child can take a group course:

- Many different options here
- Quality of the instructor and size of the class are both key
- Teach to the middle
Your child can work with a tutor:

- Most effective, and biggest investment
- Great for high or low scorers, or students who have a packed schedule
- The tutor really matters!
9. LEARN HOW TO EVALUATE TUTORS AND OVERSEE PREP
Qualities of an amazing tutor:

- Empathy
- Mastery
- Experience
- Passion
- Growth Mindset
Manage the process!

Time + Effort = Results
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