

## **Study Up on ACT/SAT**

Even if your teenager seems calm about it, you're not. College is a couple of years away and college admissions exams are looming.

Through spring, high schoolers and others will be taking SAT and ACT tests.

This, however, is not the season for panic. Experts say parents can help their youngsters by paying attention to high school course choices and the schedule for college testing.

When choosing high school courses, pick the most challenging courses. Students can't skip demanding courses and simply bone up late for the tests. Students who do the best on the math portion of the ACT have gone beyond Algebra I and Geometry and have taken Algebra II and Trigonometry. Top science scorers have taken not only Biology but Chemistry and Physics.

Use sample questions and practice tests to prepare. Parts of the test are different from exams students encounter in the classroom.

Take the admission tests more than once. Repeating the tests can reduce stress and might increase scores, especially if some months have elapsed between tests.

Rob Herald, director of college placement at Rockhurst High School in Kansas City, Missouri, advises students to take both the SAT and ACT and to take each test twice.

Students sometimes test better on one exam than the other. Some colleges will accept scores from either test, and some will accept the highest score.

Several experts said a student's test schedule should include at least three exams: the PSAT (preliminary test for SAT) in the sophomore year or early junior year. Either the ACT or SAT in the spring of the junior year should be taken. A repeat of the ACT or SAT should be taken in the fall of the senior year.

Students should use test preparation books with sample questions, provided with registration packets. If a student needs extra preparation, some options are available.

Buy preparation books at the bookstore. The books aren't expensive, often \$10-\$20, and generally are comprehensive, which also means students have to be very dedicated to get through them.

Buy computer software. The cost is higher than books, \$30-\$40, but is often more engaging. However, some software sacrifices content for entertainment.

Attend a preparation course. These offer the benefits of classroom instruction and lots of resources, but they can be expensive, as much as \$400-\$700 for an eight-week course.

Course names include Kaplan, Princeton Review and Stanford Testing Services.

Use the internet. Companies that offer preparation courses, along with the ACT and SAT, have websites that offer free information.

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