



FAQs from our Counselor Webinar: PSAT Scores – Now What?

December 6, 2016

Can you please explain how to use the Test scores to calculate the Selection Index Score for the National Merit Scholarship Program?

Answer: Add the three test scores (Reading, Writing & Language, and Math) and then double that. For example, if the Reading Test score is a 26, the W&L Test score, is a 32, and the Math Test score, is a 23.5, the sum of those scores (81.5) is doubled to give a Selection Index score of 163.

When are the state index scores released?

Answer: Each year, National Merit chooses 16,000 students as Semifinalists. Students are chosen based on the Selection Index (calculated from performance on the PSAT/NMSQT) and are designated on a state-representational basis. (In other words, each state has a designated number of semi-finalists). National Merit does not release minimum state index scores as the specific scores can vary depending on the number of test takers and student performance. There is information available on the historical National Merit cut-off scores by third parties. In general, students need to score in the top 1% in order to qualify for National Merit as 16,000 out of the 1.6 million juniors who take the PSAT/NMSQT will be recognized as semi-finalists and around 8,000 or less than 1% of juniors who take the PSAT will be awarded National Merit scholarships.

How can the student access the incorrect questions to review, online through College Board?

Answer: Students can review the incorrect questions whenever the test booklets are released (historically, with the students' paper score reports) or online through College Board by using the Access Code printed on the cover of the score report.

Would you explain the scale range for the test scores?

Answer: The scale ranges are statistically determined from the compilation of students' raw scores. The Test score range is 8 – 38, in which the Reading and Writing & Language Test scores are reported in whole-point increments. The Math Test score, however, is reported in half-point increments. The intention behind the scaled score range is to make PSAT scores directly comparable to SAT scores - if a student were to have taken the SAT instead of the PSAT, she should have achieved the same score. The score range increases (160-760 to 200-800) from the PSAT to the SAT to reflect a student's academic growth.

What is the cost per pupil for PSAT?

Answer: In 2016-17, the fee that schools pay for PSAT/NMSQT is \$15/student. Some schools cover this fee entirely or in part for their students, other charge students the full fee. Juniors may qualify for a fee waiver.

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10/k12-educators/ordering>

What is the best way to get student ID numbers to students who don't have a College Board account?

Answer: In order to get their scores online, students will need to create a College Board account. Students can create that account with the same name and address/email address that they used when they took the PSAT/NMSQT. If they do not remember the information they utilized, they can also match using their College Board student id. That id can be found on their printed score report, or counselors can look up the student id's using the online score reporting portal.

Does each question say whether or not it's easy or more difficult?

Answer: Yes. In the score report, a difficulty level is associated with each question: one blue box indicates "Easy", two blue boxes indicate "Medium", and three blue boxes indicate "Hard".

I am curious about how you recommend using the online score report in correlation with paper score report.

Answer: The PSAT Online Score Report provides an interactive experience for students to learn more about their results. We encourage counselors to have students access their online reports during group sessions and individually. (For example, if you hold an assembly where you hand out reports and talk about them, also encourage students to register and view their reports on their phones at the same time.) Students can see how they performed on easy, medium, and hard questions, and they can link to the individual questions. This is great for review and building students' understanding of how they performed. They can also view percentiles and get a summary of the skills they should work on next.

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10/scores/student-score-reports>

Is there any math content that is included on the SAT that is not on the PSAT? Is the difference more challenging questions found on the SAT?

Answer: No, there is no math content that is exclusively on either the SAT or PSAT. While there are 10 fewer Math questions on the PSAT than the SAT, that occurrence doesn't exclude any content from being on one test or the other. "Challenging" is a vague term as any given Math question can be classified as challenging to a number of students. On average, there is no distinction in difficulty between Math questions on the PSAT or the SAT. Students have reported seeing challenging questions on both the PSAT and SAT.

What percentage of PSAT students take SAT?

Answer: While we don't have specific percentages, this should give you some idea: In 2015, over 4 million students took the PSAT – including sophomores and juniors. The total number of SAT test takers for the Class of 2016 (through June 2016) was 1.6 million and the total number of SAT test takers for the Class of 2015 was 1.6 million test takers. Unfortunately, there isn't released information as to what percentage of PSAT test takers go on to take the SAT and a direct comparison is difficult to make given that multiple class years take the PSAT each year.

Why is taking PSAT better than just general SAT prep?

Answer: It's actually not. In order to adequately prepare for any standardized test, learning about the test design, structure, and content as well as the strategies that can be implemented to earn higher scores is immensely more beneficial for students than simply taking a PSAT or even multiple practice SATs. The PSAT is a good first step to gain familiarity with the PSAT/SAT, but it should be followed with focused test preparation.

Questions? Please contact Questions@Review.com.