

Common Questions About Test-Optional Admissions

Lots of schools have recently declared themselves “test-optional,” either permanently or temporarily. We know that can be confusing, so we wanted to help. Here are some common questions about test-optional admissions and answers to them.

What does it mean when a school has a “test-optional admissions policy?”

A “test-optional” policy means that a school does not require students to submit SAT® or ACT® scores, or scores from any other standardized test, for admission.

So a test-optional school doesn’t look at standardized test scores?

No, a test-optional school will not penalize students who do not submit a standardized test score. Test-optional does not mean test-prohibited, and a test-optional school will absolutely still consider test scores from students who do provide them. In fact, most test-optional schools still have the majority of applicants submit SAT or ACT scores.

Are there any schools that don’t look at any test-scores?

Yes, a handful of schools are “test-blind,” which means they do not consider test scores in admissions at all. If you submit a test score to a test blind school, they will not look at them in any way whatsoever when considering your application for admission.

What does a school look at if they don’t require test scores?

Basically, everything else in your application. You will be sending quite a bit to colleges as part of your application. Essays, letters of recommendation, extracurricular lists, interviews, and especially your high school transcript will be evaluated much more closely by admission offices if they don’t see SAT or ACT scores.

How do I know which schools are test-optional or test-blind?

Check what a school says itself. “Test-optional” and “test-blind” mean different things to different schools, and they will describe on their website or in other material what their exact take on test scores are. Every “test-optional” school views SAT and ACT scores, and how optional they really are, in its own way.

Does that mean I should send test scores to test-optional schools?

It depends. If your test scores are around a school’s averages, then yes. They will help you compared to students who do not submit test scores. Schools always like to see more information from applicants, especially if it is information that helps you. Plus, you might still need them to qualify for scholarships.

Wait, test-optional schools will still require me to submit scores for scholarships?

Yes, in fact many schools with a test-optional admission policy still require test scores for scholarships. In fact, certain scholarships require specific test scores on either the SAT or ACT, meaning you don’t just need to provide a score, but a high enough score to qualify for that scholarship.

I thought test-optional meant I wouldn’t have to take the SAT or ACT.

No. If you will be applying to any school or for any scholarship that requires SAT or ACT scores, you will not have a test-optional admissions process. You will need to prepare and take those tests just like always. And a good score can still help you at test-optional schools.

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