

## What are test optional colleges?

The term “test optional” generally refers to colleges and universities that do not require students to submit ACT or SAT test scores to be admitted to the institution. However, there really isn’t a set definition as seen at the [Fair Test](#) website, an organization that tracks such testing requirements.

Even the Fair Test definition is less than definitive. The organization defines “SAT/ACT Optional 4-Year Universities” as “Schools That Do Not Use SAT or ACT Scores for Admitting Substantial Numbers of Students Into Bachelor Degree Programs.” It’s not clear what constitutes “substantial.”

Fair Test’s listing of over 800 institutions includes the following seven footnotes:

- SAT/ACT used only for placement and/or academic advising
- SAT/ACT required only from out-of-state applicants
- SAT/ACT considered only when minimum GPA and/or class rank is not met
- SAT/ACT required for some programs
- Test Flexible: SAT/ACT not required if other college level exams specified by school, such as SAT Subject Test, Advanced Placement, or Int’l Baccalaureate, submitted
- Placement test or school-specific admissions exam score required if not submitting SAT/ACT
- Admission/Eligibility Index calculated with 3.5 GPA and combined SAT Critical Reading plus Math score of 400

Obviously, just because the test isn’t used primarily to admit most students, many students will still be required to submit the test or take some other test instead.

Furthermore, Fair Test’s list includes all institutions that offer a bachelor’s degree. This includes 53 schools that are online or include multiple sites such as the University of Phoenix. It also includes for-profit institutions as well as specialty ones such as The Art Institute and numerous schools with enrollments of less than 100.

According to the IPEDS data in the [DIY College Rankings College Search Spreadsheet](#), only 250 public or non-profit institutions with 500 or more full-time undergraduates list SAT/ACT testing as “Not Applicable” or “Neither Required nor Recommend.”

It is also important to realize that test optional will not apply to NCAA D1 and D2 athletes. The tests may also not be optional when applying for merit aid. Many schools use a combination of GPA and test scores to award merit money.

See [5 Ways to Get Smart About the SAT, ACT and College Admission Testing](#) for more information on the college testing.



**Get FREE Updates! Click to Subscribe**