What your SAT scores mean

It is about this time of year when high school juniors and seniors first start getting back their SAT scores (for those that took the test at the beginning of the school year). The anticipation of waiting to receive your score can be exiting yet can be a nerve-racking experience at the same time as it's one of the first times you will be tested/graded on a national level and have it actually mean something.

The problem is, many high schools out there have grade inflation…an "A" at one high school does not necessarily reflect an "A" at another high school; there are many schools out there that are "easier" than others. This is the one good thing about the SAT, it weeds out those with over-inflated grades and separates the cream of the crop.

Now the use of the SAT in admissions has come under much scrutiny in the last few years, but it is the one method colleges can use to compare students from one another on an academic level. Are you not receiving the grades you deserve in high school? Taking the SAT is your chance to prove to others and admissions staff that you have the smarts that it takes to go on to be a successful college student.

Did you know that you can take the SAT multiple times? Taking the SAT the first time can be grueling, as it is a pretty long test and all the test anxiety you have built up can easily get to you. Taking the test a second or third time is no problem at all, and you can even select the highest score.

The new score scale for the SAT came out in 2006. Basically there are three 800-point sections; anyone with a score of 1900 or more, you're sitting pretty which is near the 90 percentile. The average score for each section is near 500, so the average total score is about 1500.

When getting your test scores back, some of you will be happy, some of you will be disappointed, some won't have a clue what their score means. Use the following guide to see what the score you received means:

Can I get into Ivy League Schools?

Here's a side-by-side comparison of scores for the middle 50% of Ivy League applicants. If your scores fall within or above these ranges, you're on target for admission to one of these top colleges.

Use the chart below to see the 2007-08 data for colleges in the Ivy League.

SAT Scores

	Reading		Math		Writing	
	25%	75%	25%	75%	25%	75%
Brown	660	760	670	770	660	760
Columbia	660	760	670	780	660	750
Cornell	630	730	660	770	630	720
Dartmouth	670	770	680	780	670	770
Harvard	700	800	700	790	700	790

Princeton	690	790	700	790	690	780
U Penn	650	750	680	770	660	750
Yale	700	790	690	790	690	790

While you'll still receive your printed SAT score report in the mail, My SAT Online Score Report shows you more about how you performed on each section of the SAT Reasoning Test.

The writing portion of the SAT, which was added to the exam in 2006, is still a work in progress, with many colleges waiting for several years of data before factoring it into admissions decisions.

Average SAT Scores for 2008 College Bound Seniors

- Critical reading: 502
- Mathematics: 515
- Writing: 494

What is considered a "good" SAT score?

Scoring close to the mean (average), about 500 on critical reading, 500 on mathematics, and 500 on writing, tells you that you scored as well as about half of all test takers. Each college will have its own range of scores that it considers a good fit for its students. It is best to check with the college(s) you are interested in to see their mean scores for its last group of freshmen admits.

Remember, your SAT score alone is not enough to get accepted to the school of your choice. There are many other factors admissions will look at in determining whether or not you get accepted.