

# A Parent Tutorial for Understanding PSAT/NMSQT® Results

Take a look at the PSAT/NMSQT® Score Report. Notice that each section of the test—Critical Reading, Math, and Writing Skills—has its own color-coded column. Within each color-coded section is a great deal of information that provides a thorough review of performance and ways to improve.

## 1 Scores:

- Each PSAT/NMSQT score—critical reading, math, and writing skills—is based on a scale of 20 to 80.
- The score **ranges** show how much scores might vary if students were to take the PSAT/NMSQT repeatedly without learning additional skills. In other words, the scores within this range are considered “equal” statistically.
- Percentiles** compare the student’s performance with those of other students. Juniors are compared with all juniors who took the test; sophomores and younger students are compared to all sophomores who took the test.
- SAT® Ranges** estimate how a student might score on the SAT Reasoning Test™. Keep in mind that additional learning and growth before taking the SAT will affect these ranges.

**2 Review Your Answers Section:** This section shows the correct answer, the student’s response, and the difficulty level of the question. (Math questions also indicate the general math area covered in the question.) Students should have received their test book along with their Score Report. At the bottom of this section is an overview showing the number of correct answers for each level of difficulty and the number of points subtracted for wrong answers. Encourage your child to go over questions she or he got wrong. Did she or he really not know the answer? Make a careless error? Guess instead of leaving the question blank?

**3 Improve Your Skills Section:** Here are some specific skills that need improvement. These were identified based upon the pattern of responses across test questions. For each student, we give personalized feedback for up to three critical reading and math skills and up to two writing skills. This does not necessarily mean that these are the only skills that need improvement. However, the skills listed here are the ones that can be best improved through additional attention and learning. Share this information with teachers, as these skills affect classroom performance and are important for success in college.

**4 National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) Programs:** NMSC cosponsors the PSAT/NMSQT, which stands for Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. High school students enter NMSC programs, usually as juniors, by taking the PSAT/NMSQT and meeting

The image shows a sample PSAT/NMSQT Score Report. At the top, it identifies the student as STUDENT, IMA B, in Year 2005, Grade 11, with School Code 123456 and Optional Code 00. The report is divided into three main sections: Critical Reading (50), Math (52), and Writing Skills (44). Each section includes a color-coded column with a score range (e.g., 46-54 for Critical Reading) and a percentile (e.g., 47 for Critical Reading). Below the scores, there are sections for 'Review Your Answers' and 'Improve Your Skills'. The 'Review Your Answers' section shows three sample questions with the student's answer, the correct answer, and the difficulty level. The 'Improve Your Skills' section lists specific skills that need improvement, such as 'Determining an author's purpose or perspective' and 'Dealing with probability, basic statistics, charts, and graphs'. At the bottom, there is a section for 'Your Educational Plans' which includes the student's grade average (B) and recommended high school courses (English 4, Precollege mathematics, etc.).

other published entry requirements. NMSC uses the Selection Index score—the sum of the critical reading, math, and writing skills scores—as an initial screen of students who enter its programs and to designate groups of students to be honored. If the Selection Index has an asterisk, see the NMSC section on the back of the Score Report. NMSC will notify principals of students whose Selection Index scores qualify them for recognition.

**5 Your Educational Plans:** Before the test, each student provided information on her or his grade average and the college major she or he is considering. In this section, the College Board provides important information about the indicated major, including recommended high school courses that will help prepare for college-level work.

**6 Information About PSAT/NMSQT Extra:** See reverse to learn about this free online resource.

Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test  
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## Free Online Resource: PSAT/NMSQT Extra

PSAT/NMSQT Extra helps students get the most out of the PSAT/NMSQT Score Report to help them prepare for the SAT and to plan for college. At [www.collegeboard.com/psatextra](http://www.collegeboard.com/psatextra), students will have free access to the following information and tools:

- **Explanations for the answers to every question on the 2005 PSAT/NMSQT.**
- **MyRoad™: Major, college, and career exploration tool.** MyRoad includes:
  - Personality Profiler: An online assessment you can take to learn about your personality type and receive major and career suggestions
  - Sixty-seven profiles of academic fields
  - Articles covering more than 450 occupations
- **Sample SAT higher-level math questions.**
- **Student-written sample SAT essays.**

Students should have their Score Report and their test book with them when they visit [www.collegeboard.com/psatextra](http://www.collegeboard.com/psatextra). If they do not already have a College Board account, they will be prompted to create one. (They can use the same account to register for the SAT.) It typically takes less than two minutes to create this free account.

## Use collegeboard.com to help your child reach his or her important education and career goals:

Visiting collegeboard.com makes it easier for you to help your child have a successful experience preparing for and applying to college. You'll find expert advice to keep you informed throughout the college planning process.

- Ways to encourage your child to start thinking about life after high school
- Strategies for financing your child's education
- Help with curriculum planning to realize your child's specific career goals
- Information you need to help your child prepare to perform at his or her best on the SAT
- Practical advice and online tools to find the right college for your child's needs

## What happens now?

With the help of teachers and counselors, students should use the information provided on the PSAT/NMSQT Score Report to improve their skills and plan for their postsecondary goals. Here are some other suggestions for students:

- Review high school transcripts and select courses for upcoming semesters that will prepare for education and career goals.
- Take challenging courses: Consider honors and Advanced Placement.
- Sophomores should take the PSAT/NMSQT again in the fall of their junior year to enter competitions conducted by National Merit Scholarship Corporation. Juniors should register for the SAT, and possibly SAT Subject Tests™, this spring. (Online registration is easiest: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).)
- Be involved. College admissions officials look for academic competence and preparation (types/levels of academic courses taken and grades received) but also for how a student will contribute to the college community. What do students do outside of the school day? Are they involved in music, art, athletics, government, volunteer work, employment, etc.? The quality of students' involvement is important. What is the depth of their commitment? Are they assuming leadership roles? Are they making a contribution to the school or community?