



# The BHS Brief Guide To Standardized Testing

## MCAS, PSAT, SAT, ACT, SAT Subject Test, and AP

Typical Testing Timeline				
Spring 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	Spring 10 <sup>th</sup> grade	Fall 11 <sup>th</sup> grade	Spring 11 <sup>th</sup> grade	Fall 12 <sup>th</sup> grade
MCAS Science	MCAS ELA MCAS Math	PSAT	SAT or ACT	SAT or ACT



Students in Massachusetts must pass MCAS exams in English, mathematics, and science in order to earn a high school diploma. Typically students take the MCAS science test at the end of ninth grade, and the English and mathematics tests during the spring of tenth grade. Scores on MCAS tests fall in four categories: advanced, proficient, needs improvement, and failure. Students who score in the advanced category on at least one test, and either advanced or proficient on the other two are eligible for scholarships to Massachusetts state colleges or universities.

Students who do not pass English and/or mathematics are given two opportunities each subsequent year to pass a re-test, in November and March. Students who do not pass science in 9<sup>th</sup> grade can take another full science test in the spring of a subsequent year in their current subject: physics, biology, or chemistry. A biology re-test is also offered in February of each year. Students are only required to pass one Science MCAS.

Eligibility for Massachusetts State College scholarships are based on results for the full MCAS tests, not the re-tests. Students who do not take the full English and math tests in the spring of their sophomore year can only take the full test in a subsequent year if they have medical documentation excusing them from the first full-test administration.



The PSAT is a preliminary test for the SAT, given at Brookline High School on a Saturday in early October. We recommend that students take the PSAT in the fall of their junior year, and take their first SAT test later in the junior year or early in the senior year. Some students take the PSAT in the sophomore year to have another opportunity to practice. Registration for the PSAT is handled through the Guidance Office at BHS. Cost is approximately \$30. We also offer practice tests prior to the PSAT and SAT which students may sign up for through the guidance office.

Scores from the junior year administration of the PSAT qualify students to be National Merit Scholars. Students who score in the top 5% in a state are considered commended Scholars. Students who score in the top 1% in a state are National Merit Semi-Finalists, and are invited to apply to be finalists. National Merit Scholars are eligible for a variety of scholarships.

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### Special Test Arrangements

Students who require any kind of special test arrangement and/or fee waiver should speak with their guidance counselor for more information.

*Please see the Guidance Department Website: [bhs.brookline.k12.ma.us/Guidance](http://bhs.brookline.k12.ma.us/Guidance) as well as [collegeboard.com](http://collegeboard.com) and [actstudent.org](http://actstudent.org) for more information and for links to the other websites mentioned on this sheet.*

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## College Entrance Exams

Many colleges (about 90% in a 2006 NACAC Admission Trends Survey) across the country require a standardized test as part of the application process. The SAT or ACT satisfies this requirement. It is difficult to generalize about the type of student who will perform better on the SAT vs. the ACT. Usually, students take either test more than once. Some students may decide to try both tests, and submit the better score with their college applications.



The **SAT** is a 3 hour and 45 minute test, including a critical reading, math, and writing section. Brookline High offers the SAT seven times a year. Dates for this and all other exams can be found on the Guidance website. Students register and choose a test site for the SAT on the College Board website. Students who want to take the test at Brookline High School should register early as the test site often fills. Cost is approximately \$50.



The **ACT** is a standardized test similar to the SAT. Students who take the ACT usually do not have to take SAT Subject Tests, if they are applying to the small number of schools that require SAT Subject Tests. The ACT is a 3 ½ hour test, and includes sections on English, math, reading, science, and an optional essay. Registration is completed at ACT.org. The ACT is administered at BHS twice during the school year. Cost is approximately \$40.



**SAT Subject Tests** are required at a relatively small number of colleges, 14%, according to the same NACAC 2006 study. Schools that require SAT Subject Tests usually require two different subject tests. Students may select the subjects in which they take the SAT Subject Tests. Parents and students are encouraged to examine the websites of colleges that interest them, regarding SAT Subject Test requirements, as well as the College Board website, to learn more about the subject tests. Cost is approximately \$30 per test.

SAT Subject Test study books are available at most book stores. Students who are interested in taking SAT Subject Tests will benefit from doing practice tests. Students should speak with their teachers if they are interested in taking the SAT Subject Tests for any specific study information that may be available. The following are guidelines for taking SAT Subject Tests based on BHS courses.

- **English Literature:** Recommended for students who do well on the reading sections of the SAT reasoning test.
- **World History:** Recommended for students in World History II Honor. Few students take the test, but those who do generally do well.
- **US History:** Recommended for students in AP US History or Honors. AP students do exceptionally well as the test is given within two weeks of the AP exam. Honor students are also well prepared, but should plan on doing additional review.
- **Science:** If a student is passionate about one subject within science, they should review the exact subject matter of the SAT Subject Test. The Physics subject test is recommended to be taken in eleventh grade, due to the need for more math background. The Biology Ecology test is recommended for students in BSCS Honors. The Biology Molecular test is recommended for students in Biology Honors. The Chemistry test is recommended for students in Honors Chemistry. Students in LBC Honor will also be well-prepared if they review a list of additional topics which is available through the science department.
- **Math:** The Math I C subject test is recommended for students in IMP 3 or IMP 4. The Math II C test is recommended for students in Pre-Calculus Honor or Analysis/Calculus Advanced. Students in Pre-Calculus should consult with their teacher regarding the most appropriate test.
- **World Languages:** Successful students in Level 5 Honor and Level 4 Advanced classes are well prepared for Subject Tests. Interested students should use sample tests to prepare at least two months prior to the test. Most students take the Subject Test at the end of 11<sup>th</sup> grade if in Level 4 Advanced, or in the fall of 12<sup>th</sup> grade if in Level 5 Honor. Look carefully at the College Board website for specific dates and requirements. Some administrations of the test include a listening section while others do not. We find that BHS students do well on the listening sections, and that it is often to their advantage to take the session that includes it.



**AP TESTS:** Students taking BHS AP courses register for the AP exam in their respective classes. AP tests are administered at BHS in May. BHS offers over 20 AP courses. While we do not offer an AP English course, students who choose the most challenging English courses are usually well-prepared for the AP English Exam. Students interested in this exam should speak early in the year with their English teacher to make testing arrangements. Cost is approximately \$90 per test. Success on AP Exams can earn college credit. Consult with individual colleges for more information.