

3 Reasons Your PSAT Score Matters

Strong PSAT scores can lead to scholarships and help students prepare for the SAT exam.

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Achieving a high score on the PSAT can take a lot of stress out of the college admissions and financial aid process.

Most [high school](#) students are familiar with the SAT and spend considerable time getting ready for the exam. However, before they ever sit for the SAT, many will take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, a standardized test cosponsored by the College Board and National Merit Scholarship Corporation.

Many take this test without doing anything to prepare. Unfortunately, students often assume the exam is just a practice test that doesn't have any real value since [college admissions](#) offices do not use the score to assess applications.

While it is true that the score is not a factor like the [SAT and ACT](#) in admissions decisions, a good performance on the PSAT is still crucial. There are three very important reasons your score matters.

1. Scores can lead to National Merit Scholarships: The National Merit Scholarship Corporation uses these scores to qualify semifinalists who are then considered for National Merit Scholarship competition. Recognition by the National Merit program provides a monetary award and can often be leveraged to secure additional scholarships.

Recipients and finalists can become eligible for corporate scholarships and many [colleges and universities](#) offer National Merit Scholarship participants institutional grants and merit scholarships as well. In some cases, these grants cover full tuition.

College is expensive and competition for [scholarships](#) is fierce. By achieving a high score on the PSAT, students can take a lot of stress out of the college admissions

and [financial aid](#) process.

2. Good scores can indicate performance on the SAT: The PSAT is a terrific way to familiarize yourself with the structure, content and process of taking the SAT and get a sense of how you'll perform on the actual exam. Your score can show you which subjects you may not be particularly strong in, regardless of your grades in related classes.

For example, your A's in English class may not amply reflect your knowledge of obscure vocabulary or the specific essay writing skills that are critical for success on the test. Your score on the verbal section can more accurately tell you how prepared you are and therefore allow you to concentrate on studying for what you are weakest in to improve your score for the real thing.

Your performance will empower you with the information you need to [design an SAT study plan](#) that will help you earn your best possible score.

3. Doing well can provide a big confidence boost: Test anxiety and a fear of the unknown can have a negative impact on students taking the SAT for the first time. However, if you've already done well on the PSAT, you'll be at a distinct advantage.

Just as rehearsing before a performance or practicing before a sports game gives you the boost of confidence you need to succeed, posting a solid score on the PSAT will do the same for your SAT-taking experience.

Additionally, the PSAT is a tool many colleges and universities use to identify students they think may make a good addition to their student body and who may be deserving of scholarships. These scores are a way for colleges to be more selective in their recruitment process, and having schools express interest in you and recruit you to apply can also increase confidence.

Underestimating the significance of the PSAT is a common mistake, but is one that is easily corrected. The test is a critical step to getting ready for success on the SAT and by taking it seriously and working hard to achieve a high score, you can not only [get a jump-start on your SAT prep](#), you can possibly secure coveted scholarship dollars.

Source:

<http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/college-admissions-playbook/2015/07/13/beware-of-4-red-flags-of-gap-year-programs?int=a3d208>