

ACTION PLAN: Sophomores

No matter where you are academically, you should have a plan of action for the next six to twelve months to help you favorably position yourself for the test prep process.

1. Focus on doing as well as you can in school. Make sure that you're always paying attention in class, that you ask questions when you're unsure of something, and that you make appointments to see your teachers after school when you really don't understand something you're learning, especially in your math classes. Be diligent in completing your homework, and always give it your best effort. Start early on long-term papers and projects. Overall, make a commitment to be the best student you can be.

2. Read more. Read anything you'd like – books, magazines, newspapers, online articles and blog posts – just make sure you're doing so on a daily basis. And make sure that whatever you read you do so WORD FOR WORD. No rushing, no skimming. If you find that you spaced out during a paragraph and didn't pay any attention to what it meant, go back and re-read it. In order to really perform well on the SAT or ACT when the time comes, you'll need to be a good reader, and that means you need to start practicing now.

3. Try to be a better essay writer. When you're assigned an essay or report to complete at home, try hard to make it as good as it can be. Make sure your ideas are well organized, that your arguments are well presented, and, perhaps above all, that your grammar and syntax are correct and precise. If, when you proofread your essay, you think that something you wrote doesn't quite sound right, take time to fix it. Don't be satisfied until your essay sounds great when you read it all the way through. Ask your older siblings, parents, or teachers for help crafting and delivering your arguments clearly, coherently, and articulately. If you put serious effort over these next 6-12 months into becoming the best writer you can be, not only will your performance on the SAT and ACT improve markedly, but you will have also developed in yourself an invaluable skill you'll use throughout your life.

4. Get involved in extra-curricular activities now. It's going to be tough to incorporate new extra-curricular activities into your schedule when things start getting crazy in junior year, especially when you have to work test prep into the equation too. Get involved now and slowly work those activities into your weekly and daily schedule so adding something like test prep on top of it a year or year and a half from now won't seem like a terrible shock to the system.

A Level Deeper

The table below enumerates some of the specific steps you can take at this point to properly position yourself for the test prep process.

Diagnostic ACT Score Range	Diagnostic SAT Score Range	Recommended Next Steps
At or below 19	At or below 1000	Focus on doing as well as you can in your classes. It's too early for you to dive into the test prep process just yet. The most important thing you can do over the next six months to a year is to buckle down and try to absorb everything your teachers are teaching you, especially in your math and English classes.
20 - 25	1010 – 1250	Consider doing some preliminary prep or tutoring to improve your fundamentals. Both the SAT and the ACT test many concepts in grammar and math that you may need to bone up on before starting test prep in earnest. At this point, you should consider doing some academic tutoring that focuses on concepts that are commonly tested on the grammar and math portions of the SAT or ACT. Once you get the results of this diagnostic, you'll know exactly what you need to work on, and now is a good time to get started on improving your organic grammar and math skills.
26 or Higher	1250 or Higher	You'll be ready to start prepping for the SAT or ACT this spring. That is, your skill level is such that you can begin the prep process as early as this spring, if you choose to do so. You by no means have to start that early. But you'll be academically ready to do so if you'd like to. There's really no need to rush. **NOTE: Unless your math score is over 27 on the ACT portion of this diagnostic or 650 on the SAT portion, we strongly recommend that you complete Algebra 2 before beginning test prep for SAT or ACT math.