

# ARE STANDARDIZED TESTS A THING OF THE PAST?

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**Do you remember the grueling days waiting for your SAT results to be posted? Or the countless practice tests you took prepping for the test that could determine your academic future? Not many people look back at that time fondly. I know I don't.**

The SAT has never had the best reputation among students and educators. And as of this month, the College Board made a surprising move by eliminating SAT subject tests and SAT optional essay tests. When I saw the story, all I could think was it's about time.

The SAT was first taken by students in 1926. At the time of its conception, the SAT was considered an "intelligence test". And although the test has had many revisions and changes since then, the premise has stayed the same. In the early years of the SAT, many critics believe that the test favored wealthy, white students and was used as a mechanism to deny minorities admission to primarily white institutions (Mathews 2013). This trend has continued and is evidenced by some notable recent cases.

Standardized tests have always been a controversial issue amongst academics. Not all students test well, and many argue that standardized tests are not representative of a student's ability or knowledge. I strongly agree. That's why, when it came time to apply to colleges, I chose to focus on test-optional colleges and universities.

I believed that a college admissions person should judge me on my merits as a student for the past 4 years of high school, not the score of one exam.

The idea of 'test-optional' became a growing trend among colleges and universities as critics continued to highlight the SAT's flaws. This is especially true of minorities as evidenced in a 2015 survey of student's scores (Jaschik 2015). The survey found that white and Asian students on average did better on the SAT than their Black or Latino peers. After conducting further research, investigators identified one possible reason for the discrepancy of scores as the unequal access to better resources and more prep materials. White and Asian students could afford fancy prep courses and prep books while Black and Latino generally could not.

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## OPINION

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The College Board denied any intentional discrimination but soon made the decision to make the essay portion of the exam optional. This was a huge move on the side of the College Board as the essay portion was a large portion of the exam.

Since this change, prominent schools like Harvard and other Ivy League schools have made SAT scores optional and chose to rely on their own internal application process to evaluate applicants (Sorensen 2020).

Since then, colleges have slowly been moving away from standardized testing but many still use them as part of their admissions evaluation tools. The 2015 survey wasn't the last hit against the SAT. The College Board came under fire again in 2019 when two lawsuits were filed against the University of California alleging that requiring the SAT for admission was an act of discrimination (Watanabe 2019). The College Board argued that their tests were not discriminatory and that any discrimination was the fault of the American educational system.

Many colleges and universities disagreed and made the choice to either eliminate the SAT requirement overall or make it optional for any incoming applicants. This change was only accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic restricted access to testing facilities, colleges and universities as a whole are looking elsewhere to determine a student's knowledge and success and are finding that standardized test scores don't have as much weight as they used to.

This trend is further emphasized by the College Board's decision to eliminate SAT subject tests and the SAT essay (Asmelash 2021). If this trend continues, the SAT could be a thing of the past - news I'm sure every college applicant, past and present, will be thrilled to hear. I know I am.

## OPINION

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