The Four Main Standardized Tests

There are four main standardized tests you should be familiar with and take if you are planning on attending college. Standardized tests measure a student's college readiness. So while high school grades are a useful indicator of how students perform in college, there is great variation in grading standards and course rigor within and across high schools. Therefore, the SAT/ACT tests are used as they are standardized across all students, schools, and states, providing a common and objective scale for comparison.

I would recommend taking both the SAT and the ACT tests in the spring of your junior year as the tests are very distinct. This would then allow you to re-take the test your senior year for only the test you performed your best at. You can also check with the colleges you are planning to attend to find out what test they prefer.

**PLAN.** The PLAN is the pre-ACT test taken by tenth-graders to help students estimate how well they will do on the ACT. It is a comprehensive guidance resource that helps students measure their current academic development, explore career/training options, and make plans for the remaining years of high school and post-graduation years. Additional information can be obtained from their web site at [http://www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

**ACT Assessment.** This standardized test used for admissions by colleges is designed to assess high school student's general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. The tests cover four skill areas: English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning. Scores for each section are averaged to create a composite score. A perfect score on the ACT Assessment is 36. Additional information can be obtained from their web site at [http://www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

**PSAT.** The PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test) is a two-part, exam that is very similar to the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test). The PSAT consists of two 25-minute verbal sections, two 25-minute math sections, and one 30-minute writing skills section. Most people take the PSAT in the fall of their junior year in high school. Some students choose to take it during their sophomore year. Scores on the PSAT are used to determine National Merit Scholars, students who qualify for merit-based scholarships distributed throughout the United States. For additional information, talk to your high school counselor, call the PSAT information line at (609) 771-7070, or visit their web site at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

**SAT.** The SAT is one of two standardized tests used by colleges as part of their admissions criteria. The SAT Reasoning Test is a three-hour forty-five minute exam that measures critical reading, math & writing. Used for admission, scores on each section range from 200-800 points. The SAT Subject Test or SAT II consists of more than 20 subject-area or achievement tests designed to measure subject-area knowledge. Additional information can be obtained from their web site at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).