



## Understanding Score Choice and Superscoring

To decide when and how many times to take the ACT or SAT, students need to understand how **Score Choice** works. This is a policy employed by most colleges to give applicants some degree of control over which scores they send when they apply. As of the 2017 application cycle, Stanford and Yale remained among a very small number of schools still requiring applicants to send all their scores. Several others (including University of Pennsylvania and Syracuse University) abandoned that requirement for the first time in 2017, so perhaps the policy will fade out elsewhere too, but until we know for sure, students should check the websites of the schools where they're applying to find out whether or not they offer Score Choice.

Be advised, though, Score Choice does not allow students to send individual section scores from different test dates; it merely allows them to choose the dates of the tests whose full score reports will be sent. If the student achieves his or her highest section scores all the same day, it's obvious that day's test is the one to report, but what if the highest section scores were achieved on different test dates? That's when it's important to know whether or not the colleges where they're applying will superscore their tests.

**Superscoring** refers to the policy of using only the applicants' highest individual section scores even if they were achieved on different days. Most colleges will superscore the SAT, and a growing minority will superscore the ACT as well. Only an extremely small number of schools will superscore across the two tests, meaning take one section score from the ACT and another from the SAT. Individual schools' policies are generally explained on their websites under a heading labeled something like "How to Apply."

To ensure your best chance of admission to colleges that superscore, you'll need to send score reports from multiple test administrations, all those when you achieved one of your highest section scores. Students sometimes worry that admissions officers will then be able to see another score they're embarrassed about, but if the school has a Score Choice policy, the computer program used for application review generally records only the highest section scores before any human being looks at the file. Keep in mind, too, that superscoring benefits not just the applicants, but the colleges themselves by enabling them to publish higher median test scores, giving them a boost in the rankings.

Although relatively few colleges superscore the ACT, most offer Score Choice for this exam in that they instruct applicants to submit only the score report from the single test administration where they received the highest composite score.

The Common Application asks students if they wish to report their test scores on the application, and if they check “yes,” asks them to enter their highest section scores with the date each was achieved. Be aware that self-reported scores on the application are never sufficient. The student must send official scores (and pay for them) through the websites [Collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org) for the SAT or [ActStudent.org](https://actstudent.org) for the ACT.

As for SAT Subject tests (required or recommended by many of the more selective colleges and programs), when a school offers Score Choice, the applicant has complete control over which Subject tests to send even if more than one were taken on the same day.