SAT vs. ACT Comparison Chart

The SAT and ACT are two very different college entrance exams. Both are nationally administered and are used to help colleges evaluate applicants. The SAT is essentially a three-part aptitude test (Reading, Math, Writing) while the ACT is more of an achievement test with four core sections (English, Math, Reading, Science) and an optional Writing section. Many colleges will accept either test or both exams. Some colleges require one (typically the SAT).
The chart below will help you understand the structure and content of the SAT and ACT.

	SAT	ACT
Fee	$54.50 ($82.50 late registration)	$39.50 without Writing / $56.50 with Writing
Length	3 hours, 45 minutes	3 hours, 25 minutes (includes optional 30-minute Writing Test)
Sections	10 Sections: 3 Critical Reading, 3 Math, 3 Writing (including Essay), 1 Experimental (not scored)	4 Sections (plus optional Writing Test): English, Math, Reading, Science, Writing
Subjects	Critical Reading Math Writing	English Math Reading Science Writing (optional)
Reading	Reading passages with questions pertaining to comprehension and sentence completion	4 passages, 10 questions per passage
Science	N/A	Science (analysis, knowledge, problem solving)
Math	Arithmetic, geometry, algebra, and algebra II	Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and trigonometry
Essay	Required	Optional (final section)
Score Composition	$1/3$ Math $1/3$ Reading $1/3$ Writing	¼ English ¼ Math ¼ Reading ¼ Science
Scoring	Aggregate score 600 - 2400 based on total of 3 scores 200- 800 (Reading, Math, Writing) Score of 0-12 for Essay	Composite score 1-36 based on average of 4 sections (English Math, Reading Science) Score 0-12 for Optional Essay.
Penalties	Penalties (typically ¼ point deducted) for wrong answers	No penalties for incorrect answers
Sending Scores to Colleges	Currently entire score history is sent. Starting with the March 2009 test date, students can select ("opt-in feature") which will allow them to choose specific test date(s) – 3/09 and forward - and all scores from the selected test date(s) will be sent.	Student decides which scores are sent
Additional Information	www.collegeboard.com	www.actstudent.org