

# *SAT/ACT Test Day Tips*

The SAT and ACT shouldn't be treated the same as regular school tests—these exams require skills like critical thinking and problem-solving, not just raw knowledge. So they should be treated as regular tests of skill, like a soccer game. For that reason, here are five things you need to do leading up to test day to ensure your best performance.

1. **Do not cram practice tests. Leave 3-7 days of rest between your last practice test and test day.**

- a. Practice tests are mentally draining. This fatigue adds up as you take several practice tests. They absolutely build your skill, and are the best way to prepare for the SAT and ACT. But you need to be fully recovered in order to perform your best, which means taking a minimum of three days off before the test, though I recommend taking a full week off.
- b. If test day is far off, structure your training to have this extra week off.
- c. If test day is a week away and you haven't taken any practice tests, you will benefit from taking 1-3 practice tests in the next week, though you should still take at least one day off before the exam.
- d. If you tried your absolute hardest in the Monday scrimmage, then the Tuesday scrimmage, then the Wednesday scrimmage, will you be at your best on game day on Thursday?

2. **Sleep well.**

- a. This tip is common but absolutely necessary. There are many ways to do this, and ideally, you will have a good sleep schedule (7+ hours a night) long before test day.

3. **Warm up on test day.**

- a. These tests are usually taken in the morning—when your brain is cold and sleepy.

- b. Warm up your brain by going through a practice test and answering the easy questions. It's fine if you have done the practice test before since you just need to warm up by thinking critically, finding your answer, and checking it.
  - c. For the SAT, warm up with questions from both sections.
  - d. For the ACT, I'd suggest warming up with just the English and Math sections. The Reading section usually requires that you read an entire passage before answering any questions, which may tire you out (like sprinting an 800m before your soccer game). You won't need to warm up for the Science section since your skills will already be warm after completing the other three sections.
4. **Don't have too much food and drink.**
- a. Fasting has been shown to increase focus. That said, I feel the hunger nullifies this bonus. Thus, I'd suggest eating a small breakfast to avoid getting too hungry during the test and avoid the sleepiness from eating a large meal. Snacks are fine to have.
  - b. Be careful with drinks. Needing to pee during the test will undoubtedly hurt you. Drinking caffeinated drinks along with water to wash it down will likely fill up your bladder. If you really need the caffeine, buy caffeine pills. Take half a pill an hour before the test and the other half during the first break.
5. **Take the test in the summer. Otherwise, take Saturday test dates, ideally after a Friday with no school.**
- a. Like practice tests, school is mentally draining. Thus, you want to take the test in the summer or after a day of no school.
  - b. School may psych you out. A test date on a school day, when you must go to class after the test, will be more intimidating than a test date on a Saturday when you have no other commitments.