

SAT Math vs. High School Math

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Understanding the difference between high school math versus SAT math can mean the difference between a great score and a dismal one. The math a student takes in his final two years of high school is similar to SAT math. The SAT math assesses your knowledge of statistics, algebra II, geometry, algebra and general arithmetic. Though the content is similar, the format and style of the SAT math questions as well as the resources are different than in high school math.

Types of Math

Four mathematical strands are assessed on the SAT math section: numbers and operations; algebra and functions; geometry and measurement; and data analysis, statistics and probability. There are a total of 54 questions on the SAT math section. Questions involving numbers and operations constitute 20 to 25 percent of the test. Algebra and functions questions comprise the highest percentage of the SAT math test at 35 to 40 percent. Geometry and measurement problems are 25 to 30 percent of the test, while questions containing data analysis, statistics and probability make up the smallest part and represent only 10 to 15 percent of the test.

Benefits of Guessing

If you guess on a high school math test, it is probably not to your advantage; however, the SAT does not penalize for guessing, but there is a wrong-answer penalty. You receive one point for every correct answer and a fraction of a point is deducted for every incorrect answer, except on the student-produced or write-in responses. Each multiple choice question has five possible responses, so if you can eliminate at least one wrong answer, it is to your advantage to guess.

Formulas

Depending on the teacher, formulas may not be provided on a high school math assessment. SAT math is designed to determine how well you have mastered the formulas taught in typical one-year, college-prep high school courses. Prior to the test, become familiar with the commonly used SAT math formulas given at the beginning of each section. You will have to use formulas on both types of SAT math questions -- multiple choice and the student-produced responses -- that require you to write in your answer.

SAT Math Vocabulary

SAT math assumes that you know and understand basic math and requires you to also know general math vocabulary. Since math terms appear repeatedly on the SAT math section, familiarize yourself with the basic math terms, such as integers, remainder, positive, negative, multiple, factor, prime, mean, median, mode, less, fewer, rational, real, domain and range. These terms will frequently appear on the SAT math section without explanation, so memorizing the terms and their definitions is essential.