**Who should take the PSAT?**

In October each year, the Scottsdale Unified School District provides **every sophomore** with the opportunity to take the PSAT during the school day **at no cost** to the student and their family. This helps our students get the feel of the test and an early start on college planning and preparation.

It is only the scores from the **PSAT** taken in the **junior year** that are considered for the National Merit Scholarship and other important academic competitions. Interested juniors must register and pay at the DMHS Bookstore to take the test during the SUSD assigned PSAT test date. Registration Information is announced in September.

Juniors can use the results from their PSAT taken their sophomore year to study. There are also numerous no cost programs, live and online, to help students study prior to the PSAT and many courses offered through test prep companies and tutors.

**1. Great Practice for the SAT**
By taking the PSAT, you'll receive free access to the College Board’s [My College Quickstart™](https://quickstart.collegeboard.org/posweb/login.jsp), where you can try hundreds of practice questions to help you improve test-taking skills. The College Board also provides you with a customized study plan based on your PSAT performance, allowing you to focus on those areas which need the most help. Studies have shown that students who take the exam more than once often score higher on subsequent tests, so you may want to consider taking the PSAT as early as your freshman year. Those who have the opportunity to take the exam several times may also find they are more confident and relaxed when moving on to the SAT and/or ACT.

**2. Connect to Colleges**Students who take the PSAT can opt-in to the College Board’s free Student Search Service. This service allows colleges to identify students based on several factors, including, but not limited to:

* Intended major
* Grade point average
* State residency

More than 1,100 different colleges participate in the Student Search Service, giving you the opportunity to connect with colleges that you may be unfamiliar with or had not previously considered. You also typically receive brochures and other marketing materials, as well as information on campus tours and other upcoming events.

**3. Gain Access to Scholarships**

Perhaps the best kept secret about the PSAT is the opportunity to earn [free money](https://www.unigo.com/scholarships) for college. Students who take the test during their junior year may be selected to participate in one of the scholarship and/or recognition programs directly linked to the exam.

Depending on your score, you may qualify for one (or more) of the following:

[National Merit Scholarship Program](http://www.nationalmerit.org/nmsp.php) – Each year, approximately 7,600 National Merit® Finalists are selected to receive scholarships through the National Merit® Scholarship program. Students may receive either a one-time $2,500 National Merit® Scholarship, a corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship (varying amounts), or a college-sponsored Merit Scholarship (varying amounts). An additional 1,300 students who were not selected as Finalists will be awarded Special Scholarships (varying amounts). Scholarship winners are chosen based not only on their PSAT scores, but also their skills, accomplishments and academic record.

[National Achievement Scholarship Program](http://www.nationalmerit.org/nasp.php) – Outstanding Black American students have the opportunity to be recognized by both the National Merit® Scholarship Program and the National Achievement® Scholarship Program (NASP), though they can only receive monetary compensation through one program. Approximately 800 students each year receive scholarships from the NASP. Seven hundred receive the $2,500 National Achievement® Scholarship and the remaining 100 students receive a corporate-sponsored Achievement Scholarship.

[National Hispanic Recognition Program](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about/nhrp.html) – Although the National Hispanic Recognition Program (NHRP) does not provide financial awards directly to students, being named is an important academic recognition that may lead to scholarship offers from prospective colleges. Each year, 5,000 of the top scoring Hispanic students are recognized for their academic achievement through this program.

Although students are not required to take the PSAT, the exam does help many prepare for the more rigorous SAT. It is a good measurement of how well you may score on the SAT and can help you target areas for improvement prior to taking the exam. The PSAT has a total of five short sections (two for reading, two for math, one for writing), taking a total of 2 hours and 10 minutes to complete. The fee to take the PSAT is generally $14, though some schools charge an additional administrative fee. If you want to prepare for the PSAT, there are several [free practice tests](https://www.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt/preparation) and reading assessments online. This year, the [PSAT](https://www.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt/calendar) will be administered on October 15 and October 18, so be sure to contact your [guidance counselor](https://www.unigo.com/blog/questions-you-should-ask-your-guidance-counselor/) soon to ensure you don't miss the opportunity to take the exam.