

SD-ACT Parent/Guardian Guide

South Dakota's High School Assessment for Public School Juniors Starting in Spring 2026	
What is the SD-ACT?	<p>The ACT is a well-known, standardized college admissions test that measures student skills in English, math, reading, science, and writing. It now also serves as South Dakota's official high school assessment and is used in school and district accountability report cards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required for All Public School Juniors: Students will take the SD-ACT at no cost. • Online and Timed: The test is administered online, is timed, and will be taken during the regular school day.
Test Dates	<p>Your child's school/district will choose one of the following test events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Window 1: February 24-27, March 2-6 ▶ Window 2: March 10-13, March 16-20 ▶ Window 3: March 24-27, March 30-31, April 1-3
How to Prepare	<p>Free ACT Prep Resources Available to All High School Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students in grades 6 through 12 have access to SD MyLife, an online platform that supports college and career planning. Within SD MyLife, students can use a free ACT prep tool called Methodize to help them get ready for the SD-ACT. • In addition, the ACT Test Prep website offers free online courses and resources to support students as they prepare for the exam.
What students should expect on Test Day	<p>What to Expect on Test Day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing Time: Students should plan for approximately 3.5 hours of testing. • Calculators: A built-in calculator is available within the math section of the ACT, so there's no need to purchase one. However, if your child prefers to use a hand-held calculator, please review the ACT Calculator Policy to ensure it meets the approved guidelines.
Parent Support Tips	<p>How You Can Support Your Child on the SD-ACT</p> <p>You play an important role in helping your child feel confident and prepared for the ACT. Here are a few simple ways to support them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage Preparation: Take advantage of free ACT prep tools like Methodize (available through SD MyLife) and resources on the ACT Test Prep website. • Promote Healthy Habits: Ensure your child gets plenty of rest, eats a nutritious breakfast, and stays hydrated—especially on test day. • Stay Positive: Help reduce test anxiety by offering encouragement and reminding your child that this is just one step in their journey.
Benefits	<p>In 2025, about 60% of South Dakota high school students took both the ACT and the state's high school assessment. To simplify testing and reduce stress, the ACT is now the official state assessment for high school students. This change supports college and career readiness while reducing the testing burden on students and families.</p> <p>What This Means for Your Student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Test Instead of Two: Students no longer need to take both the ACT and a separate state exam if they plan to apply to university. • Less Time Testing: The ACT takes approximately 3.5 hours, including breaks—giving students more time to focus on learning. • Free Score Reports: Each student can send up to four score reports to colleges of their choice—for free.