JOURNAL 23 – Standardized Tests

[**Murray Rosenbaum**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/murray-rosenbaum/)

A sixteen-year-old who goes to Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School in NYC

**A Teenager's View on Standardized Tests**

Posted: 11/03/2014 10:38 am EST Updated: 11/03/2014 10:59 am EST

Whether or not you're a teenager, you've heard about standardized testing for colleges. Tests like the ACT or the SAT are known for their length and difficulty in the U.S. and internationally. The main purpose of these tests is to show colleges your academic capabilities in the form of a number score.

All in all, I personally think the SAT and ACT are very useful because the tactics you learn to take them are extremely effective with regular school testing as well. These tests also force you to think about more abstract math problems and how to solve them when you are given nearly no variables. One main issue that people have with the tests is the fact that to do your best, a huge amount of studying and tutoring is required.

The tests themselves used to have an entirely different purpose. When the SAT were first [administered](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/03/03/big-score%22%20%5Ct%20%22_hplink) in 1926, it wasn't a test that should've been studied for. Over time, as more schools made the SAT mandatory, more and more students began studying for the test to improve their scores. Now students study for MONTHS beforehand taking countless mock tests and power through hours of tutoring. In the end, they come out of the testing process with a score that themselves and colleges can be proud of, but there have been strange changes in the beginning stages of the testing process.

Last year, when I was a sophomore, I took the PLAN. The PLAN is a test meant for sophomores to help them understand the process way ahead of time. The PLAN doesn't help with colleges or overall test scores in the long run; it's a practice that is mandatory for students. When I took it, it was about two to three hours long. No studying involved -- just go to school and take the test. I was talking to this year's sophomores and they told me a horror story. The test administrators have decided to change the test format. They've added a few sections, making the test an unheard of five hours for normal time test takers. There is absolutely no standardized test you would ever have to take for colleges that is five hours long.

I decided to confirm this with another student who was even more outraged by the change. Because he had extra time, his test would be eight hours long. Wow. He went to school at 8 a.m. on a Saturday and left at 4 p.m., spending the whole day taking this test. I understand wanting to prepare students for the college testing process, but making a mandatory five-hour test in sophomore year when the test itself doesn't assist you in the long run is a little too far.

There has been more and more controversy surrounding the SAT and ACT recently. People and colleges alike believe that test scores should not be a deciding factor of a student's eligibility to a college. More colleges are making test scores "optional" during the admission process. Whether or not the tests are actually optional is a completely different conversation.

Overall, I don't think that the idea of a test should go away. While the testing process could be flawed in certain ways, such as taking 35 minutes to fill in all of the required individual bubbles to give your information to the testing organization before EVERY test, the idea behind it is solid. These tests require a fair amount of effort and time that could be observed in how you do on the test itself. All in all, these tests are not the only factor that could make or break you in getting into the college of your dreams. Your grades and who you are as a person makes all the difference; so there's no need to focus and panic about the test portion, just take it as it comes and do your best. I wish all of you who, like myself, are taking tests this year the best of luck.

1. **Do you agree with the author’s view on standardized testing? Why or why not?**
2. **What issues do you have with standardized tests?**
3. **What do you think are the pros and cons of standardized tests?**
4. **What importance do you think colleges should give SAT and ACT scores?**
5. **Should standardized tests involve studying ahead of time or should they just be taken on the spot? Explain. Is the process too time consuming for what it’s worth?**
6. **What do you think should be the determining factors for being accepted into a college? Explain.**