

Testing Requirements For Community College Transfer Students

Many 4-year schools require transfer students to submit SAT or ACT scores with their applications. Before worrying about this, know that you may not have to retake these—even if your scores were just OK.

By Diane Melville - Updated: February 19, 2016

What You'll Learn

- Which test scores school may request from you.
- How long old scores typically stay valid.
- Reasons you may or may not want to retake your tests.



If you're a community college student, you probably thought you'd never hear the acronyms "SAT" or "ACT" again. Unfortunately, if you are a prospective community college transfer student, then you may have to confront these old tests again after all.

As you may know, 4-year schools require high school applicants to submit SAT/ACT scores, but what you may not know is that many 4-year schools require transfer students to submit test scores as well. This can catch a lot of students off guard during the transfer application process—and leave them with no other option but to register for the next available testing date ASAP.

To help you if you're planning to transfer, here are the testing requirements you need to know.

The Tests

If your transfer school requires standardized test scores, they will usually ask for either the SAT or ACT (your preference) as well as the TOEFL if you are not a native English speaker. Sometimes, the schools will give you the option of submitting SAT II subject tests with your application if you'd like.

Submitting Old Test Scores

Test scores are usually good for a number of years after you've taken the test. Below is a list of tests and their validity terms.

- **TOEFL:** Scores are good for 2 years.
- **ACT:** Scores are good for up to 5 years.
- **SAT:** Scores may be good for up to 5 years. (While I couldn't find an official answer from The College Board, it appears that most schools accept scores that are less than 5 years old. Ask your prospective transfer schools about their policies.)

To Retake The Test Or Not To Retake The Test ...

I get this question a lot from prospective transfer students, and my answer is always a very helpful "it depends."

While your grades and test scores from high school matter, they don't matter as much for transfer as your grades/performance in community college. Remember, as a transfer student, you've already proven that you can handle college-level courses, and those grades are better predictors of your college completion chances than your old test scores.

That being said, I suggest that students considering retaking a standardized test consider the following before making a decision either way:

- **Are you above "average"?** How do your existing test scores compare to the average scores of students admitted into that school? (You can usually find this information on the admissions' website of the school.)
- **What will it cost you?** If you were to retake the test, would you have the time to study for the exam? Would the test fee be a financial burden? If so, would you **qualify for a fee waiver**?
- **Did you have really good grades in high school?** Having good grades in high school and community college will probably outweigh having average test scores.

If you're still not sure after answering these questions, talk with your guidance counselor about testing requirements and check with your intended transfer schools to see if they require standardized test scores for transfer admissions (and which ones). Doing this research early on will prevent you from having a lot of headaches and heartaches later in the process.

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