

Navigating Your Way Through High School Exams

- Alicia Katz

I sat down today and thought for a moment with one question stuck in my head. How many tests have I taken in my high school career? How many times have I written my name on a scantron? How many nights have I missed sleep due to studying or just lying awake? How often do I get back a grade I like? How many times do I get one back that I don't? American high schools are well known for their relentless testing and scoring. And whether the tests are the SATs, ACTs, AP exams, or just regular old tests, the College Board and grades can end up running your life.

Your parents took 'em, your siblings took 'em, and now it is your turn. The SAT, a test whose name as of 1997 no longer stands for anything. Isn't that encouraging? This College Board test has been around forever or 1926, your pick. It runs throughout the school year, allowing you many days to wake up at six o'clock on a Saturday and go take a test. Now, taking the SAT is not a requirement, but it can certainly feel like it with all of your peers hiring tutors and whatnot. It is important to remember that you do not have to take every test available to you. Your parents will tell you one thing, guidance counselors, and friends yet another. But the truth is, they are just guessing what is right for you. Only you truly know what is right. So, before you wake yourself up at the crack of dawn on a Saturday, ask yourself a few questions. Am I planning on going to college? Do I have a list of ten or so colleges I would like to visit and know more about? What do these colleges require for admission? And finally, how do I find the test for me?

With the new SAT and the similar ACT, it can be difficult to know what to take and when. Knowing the differences between the ACT and the SAT can be fundamental when deciding which to take. Asking your guidance counselor about the similarities and differences is easy and can make the decision simple. It is also important to know that you can take both the SAT and the ACT, but that is by no means a requirement.

Whether or not you take the big Saturday tests, you will have to face tests in high school, and although it may not be pleasant, it is inevitable. All I can say to you is that you must figure out the plan that works for you. If flashcards are your things, stick with it. If rewriting your notes is your thing, then go for it. Your study techniques are made to help you, not stress you out. It is important to remember to always remain relaxed and in control. High school will end and it will be okay.

Incoming freshman, you have nothing to worry about as long as you do your best and remain positive. Good luck!