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# SAT Score Validity Process

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE  
QUESTION SAT SCORES

# Why We Question Some SAT Scores

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Over 2 million students take the SAT® every year, and the vast majority of these students' scores are delivered without incident. However, to protect the fairness of the exam and ensure that scores accurately reflect students' academic abilities, there are times when we question the validity of a student's scores.

Here are some of the most common reasons we question a student's scores:

- A college or university submits a request to verify a student's SAT scores based on inconsistencies in the student's application materials.
- We get information from test center staff and/or other students, calling scores into question.
- There is substantial evidence of unusual matching answers or other evidence of score invalidity.

## Initial Review

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When scores are called into question, our Test Security team holds the scores and conducts a review.

To ensure the student's SAT scores are valid, we may review any or all of the following:

- The student's answers compared with other students'
- The student's scores compared with previous scores or scores on different sections of the test
- The handwriting on the answer sheet compared with handwriting on other available documents
- The student's essay compared with other students' essays and/or other published or unpublished sources
- The student's photo for the questioned administration compared with other records
- The student's answer sheet compared with other records
- Scratch work in the test book compared with their responses on any given section

## After the Initial Review

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After our initial review, if we have reason to conclude a student's scores are invalid, we will contact the student and let them know their scores are on hold. When this happens, it's usually because we've found one or more of the following:

- Significant agreement between the student's scores and other students' scores
- Substantial evidence that the student's responses were not their own
- Substantial evidence that the student accessed test materials before test day

If we do not find substantial evidence that scores are invalid, we will release the scores to the student and any schools the student designated to share their scores with. If a designated school initially questioned the scores, we communicate with them directly, letting them know the scores are valid.

If we find substantial evidence that a student's scores are invalid, we notify the student and give them three options to resolve the matter:

- Cancel the scores
- Retest to confirm the questioned scores
- Request further review

## If a Student Needs Advice on Their Options

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If a student isn't sure which option is right for them, they should feel free to speak with their parents, teachers, guidance counselors, or any other trusted source.

They can also reach out to our Test Security team by email at [scorevalidity@collegeboard.org](mailto:scorevalidity@collegeboard.org).

## Canceling Scores

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The student can request to have their scores canceled. If they paid a test fee, we will send them a full refund. The refund will be processed in the same manner the payment was made.

If the scores were already sent to colleges, we'll let them know these scores are canceled. In general, we will not disclose the specific reason for canceling the scores.

The student is welcome to register for the SAT in the future unless otherwise notified.

## Retesting to Confirm Questioned Scores

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If the student feels their scores are valid, they may choose to retest—free of charge—to confirm that the questioned scores accurately reflect their ability.

The retest, which we arrange quickly, is given under secure conditions. The student must present [positive identification](#).

A retest score must be within 90 points of the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) score and within 90 points of the Math score to confirm a questioned score.

For example, the student would need to obtain an EBRW retest score of 510 or higher to confirm a questioned EBRW score of 600 and a Math retest score of 520 or higher to confirm a questioned Math score of 610.

If the retest scores confirm the questioned scores, then the scores are released to the student and any colleges they may have selected to share scores with. For each section of the test, we will report whichever score is higher (the questioned scores or the retest scores).

If the retest scores do not confirm the questioned scores, then we'll cancel the questioned scores. However, if the retest scores do not confirm the questioned scores but the student is satisfied with the retest scores, we can release the retest scores to the student and any colleges they may have selected.

**Note:** The retest option is available only to students who tested in the United States, U.S. territories, and Canada.

## Further Review

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If the student does not want to cancel their questioned scores or retest, they can request a further review. At this point the Test Security team will compile all necessary documents to submit to the College Board Board of Review. The Board of Review is a separate group of professionals at College Board who are independent of the investigation of the score validity case.

When a case goes to the Board of Review, the student is encouraged to provide digital copies of any information that may help to confirm the validity of their questioned scores, such as:

- Scores from state assessments or other standardized tests
- A copy of their high school transcript
- Handwriting samples
- A personal statement explaining why they feel their scores are valid
- Any other information that demonstrates their academic standing

The Board of Review looks over the evidence and any information the student shares to determine whether there's substantial evidence that the questioned scores are invalid.

If even one member of the Board of Review finds that there isn't substantial evidence that the scores are invalid, then the questioned scores are released.

If, however, all members of the Board of Review find substantial evidence that the scores are invalid, then the student is offered the following options to resolve the matter:

- They can cancel the questioned scores (as described above).
- They can retest to confirm the questioned scores (as described above).
- They can challenge the Board of Review's decision in binding arbitration.

## Arbitration

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A student who has completed the Board of Review process can ask to have a third-party arbitrator, appointed by the American Arbitration Association, determine whether College Board acted in good faith in following its score validity process.

This option is only available to students who has tested in the United States and U.S. territories.

Students who choose this option may be required to sign a College Board arbitration agreement that spells out the procedures that will apply in the arbitration.

Arbitration is intended only as an independent review to determine whether College Board acted in good faith in following its score validity process. This review is based upon the documents alone. The arbitrator will review only the information that had been submitted to the Board of Review when it decided to cancel the scores. Therefore, students may not submit any information in the arbitration that was not submitted to the Board of Review within the allotted time provided.

College Board covers the filing fees paid to the American Arbitration Association. The student will be responsible for any other fees or expenses they incur in connection with the arbitration.

## Acceptance of College Board Terms and Conditions

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We work to administer the SAT under secure, standardized conditions that give all students the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

Before the test begins, students agree to abide by the SAT Terms and Conditions that give College Board the right to review scores when their validity is questioned and to cancel scores when there is substantial evidence that they are invalid.

# Fairness and Privacy

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Our goal is to treat all students fairly and to make our procedures clear and transparent. Our communications in cases of questioned scores—including this document—are designed to help students understand our procedures for reviewing scores so that questions about score validity can be resolved quickly, economically, and equitably.

We also strive to protect the privacy of students whose scores are questioned. This means we avoid discussing with anyone facts that would identify a student, and we share personal information only with the student and persons designated by the student. However, if the student makes public filings or statements concerning their questioned scores, we may make a public response. We may also disclose information to third parties as set forth in the SAT Terms and Conditions.

**Note:** Generally, students must give us written permission to talk to anyone about their questioned scores and our investigation, including their parents; however, if the student is under 18 years of age, we do not insist on written permission to talk with a parent.

