

# Scoring and Equating

The College Board uses a process called equating to adjust for slight differences in difficulty among versions of the SAT, such as exams taken on different days.

## What is Equating?

Equating makes sure that a score for a test taken on one date is equivalent to a score from another date. It is standard practice for assessments like the SAT®. The College Board uses this process because it's important that the score a student receives on the SAT means the same regardless of when the student took the test. This ensures that there's no advantage to taking the SAT during one administration versus another.

A score of 540, for instance, on the Math section of one day's test means the same thing as a 540 on a test taken on a different day—even though the questions are different. It's important to note that this can mean that in some cases a single incorrect answer on one SAT could equal two or three incorrect answers on the SAT taken on a different day, or vice versa.

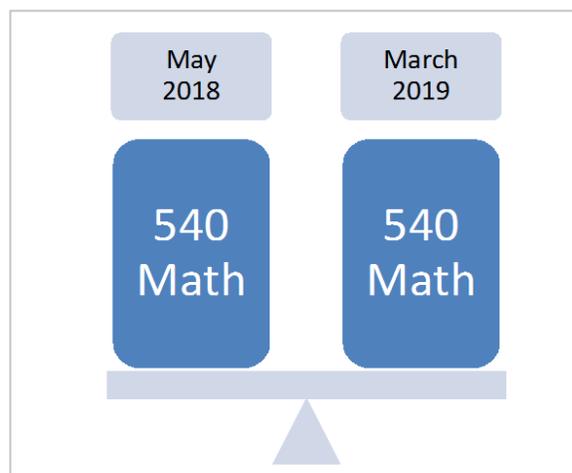
## Why Equating Is Important

Equating is important for higher ed for a couple of reasons:

1. Students take standardized exams at different times. Admissions officers need to be confident that comparing the scores of students who took the SAT in August 2017 are equivalent to the scores of the students who took the exam in October 2018.
2. Equating allows admissions officers to compare scores of students who may have taken the exam more than once. This is especially important with the new SAT, which emphasizes the importance of practice and effort. An applicant who demonstrates improvement from one test administration to the next can be considered similarly to how you view a high school GPA that shows improvement from one school year to the next.

## Scaled vs. Raw Scores

To equate scores across multiple tests, the raw score may not necessarily convert to the same scaled score. In other words,



the number of right and wrong questions may not convert to the same scaled score across all tests. The differences are not great, but they occur.

For example, on one test administration, a student may have gotten only six math items wrong but received the same score they had on a prior exam when they got eight wrong. The level of difference in a student's performance is very small; certainly too small to draw any appropriate inferences about a student's ability to be admitted or to complete college work.

Differences in raw vs. scaled scores are sometimes difficult for students to understand. However, it presents an opportunity to emphasize that these kinds of differences are minor compared to other background information that admissions officers use when evaluating students for admission.

## Equating is Not Grading on a Curve

Some students and parents confuse "equating" with "grading on a curve," but it's not the same thing. When a test is scored on a curve, the score may change depending on how everyone else performed on the test. A student's SAT score is based only on how they perform and is never affected by another student's performance.