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BLACKBOARD | SAT

Hold That Score, and That One, and That One . . .

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STARTING in spring, students will be able to pick which [College Board](#) scores are sent to admissions offices, by test date for the SAT and by individual exam for subject tests. Heretofore, an applicant's every score was automatically sent. ACT has long allowed students to pick which scores colleges see. A cause for celebration?

THUMBS UP

You can hide the fact that it took six tries to crack 700 on critical reading (15 percent take the test three or more times) as well as any middling subject test scores.

You can use your first try as a practice exam, becoming more comfortable with format and timing under real conditions. ("Test anxiety can cause some smart students to be bad test-takers," says Marilyn Emerson, a New York admissions consultant. "Being able to pick the best score might mitigate this effect somewhat.")

THUMBS DOWN

You can take the test over and over. Robert Schaeffer, public education director at FairTest, predicts a flurry of test-taking among affluent students. Low-income students can take the \$45 exam free only twice.

You can obsess more. Should you send the sitting with the highest writing score even though you bombed in math? How many do you send? "The change could disadvantage a student, since you can choose only your best scores from a single sitting," says Jerry Lucido, a vice provost of the [University of Southern California](#). Like many colleges, U.S.C. does not look at an applicant's combined score but the best score from each of the SAT's three sections, regardless of when taken. U.S.C. plans to ask students to ignore the new option and release all their test scores, Mr. Lucido says, "so we can better understand the progress the student has made.