
Tests - CHSPE and GED by Wes Beach



Tests provide a limited means of measuring test-taking ability and maybe other things. Don't let them be any kind of measure of who your kids are. They can, however, serve important practical purposes such as high school completion or college admissions and credit.

There are two tests by means of which to earn a high-school-diploma-equivalent certificate: the **California High School Proficiency Examination**(CHSPE) and the **General Educational Development** (GED). The CHSPE has a narrower focus and tests skills and knowledge in reading, math, writing, and language. The GED includes these areas and also tests in science and social studies. Opinions vary about which test is more difficult, and different perceptions probably arise from kids with different strengths. The GED is more widely known and may be more readily accepted, although it is a myth that the CHSPE Certificate is unacceptable outside California.

In California (different states have different rules), anyone 18 or older can take the GED, and there are exceptions for somewhat younger people under some circumstances. It is administered by adult education schools in public school districts and is offered frequently. Contact your local adult school for information on the GED or call the GED Office at the California Department of Education at (800) 331-6316.

The CHSPE may be taken by anyone who, on the day of the exam, is 16 or older, or has finished the tenth grade, or is enrolled in the second semester of the tenth grade. This exam is offered two or three times a year at test sites throughout the state. CHSPE information bulletins can be found at high schools and libraries or at <http://www.chspe.net/>. For questions not answered in the bulletin, call (866) 342-4773. There is a great deal of misinformation about the CHSPE floating around, especially within the public schools. Check the official bulletin to confirm anything you hear. A student who passes the CHSPE still has the right to attend public high school if desired.

If a CHSPE or GED certificate is to be used for admission to college, entering the military, specific job requirements, etc., be sure to check at the source (the colleges, the military, the employer, etc.) regarding their policies.

Preparation books for these exams can be found in bookstores and libraries.

The [College Board/Educational Testing Service](#) offers a number of exams that can support college admission and/or can lead to college credit:

- The PSAT, a shortened version of SAT I, is usually taken by high school juniors. If a student is in high school at the time he takes this test, he is automatically entered into the National Merit Scholarship competition. The PSAT is administered by high schools on their campuses; non-enrolled students may be allowed to take the test. Contact local high schools.
- SAT I (possibly along with SAT II) may be required for admission to four-year colleges and universities. There are two parts to SAT I: verbal - analogies, sentence completions, and critical reading questions - and math at the high school college preparatory level. The SAT's (I & II) are given at test sites throughout the state; sites are listed in the application booklet (see below).
- SAT II is a set of separate tests on high school subjects - world history, chemistry, French, etc.
- Advanced Placement: Colleges often grant credit for sufficiently high scores on AP exams. These exams are final exams in college-level classes taught in high school and are given at high schools at the end of the courses; students who have not taken the courses may be allowed to take the exams.
- Colleges also grant credit for good scores on CLEP exams. These exams are generally easier than AP exams, are given at test centers throughout the state, and cover the content of more than thirty college-level courses.
- ACT (formerly American College Testing) offers the ACT, a somewhat broader college admission test that colleges may use instead of or in addition to the SAT. The ACT consists of four sections: English, math, reading, and science.

Even when SAT/ACT scores aren't required, they provide one way (there are others) to demonstrate academic ability and acquired knowledge in the absence of a traditional transcript. It may be possible to gain admission to the schools your kids choose through testing alone, and impressive test scores always add strength to a college application. Just as in the case with the SAT/ACT, good scores on AP and/or CLEP exams can support a college application. Check carefully with colleges of interest

for their policies regarding credit. Classes that prepare students for these tests may be offered by high schools, adult schools, community colleges, and private companies.

Guides and preparation materials can be found in libraries and bookstores. Explanatory and application materials from the College Board and ACT can be found at high schools, colleges, and libraries, and also can be obtained directly from the College Board at (510) 873-8000 or at <http://www.collegeboard.org>; SAT tests will be changing within the next few years. To keep informed of those changes, check the website <http://www.collegeboard.com/about/newsat/newsat.html>. Information about the ACT can be obtained at (916) 631-9200 or at <http://www.act.org>. Information on the GED is available at <http://www.acenet.edu/calec/ged>.