Overview

Starting with the fall 2025 administration, the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT) will move to a digital model. This computer-based assessment will immediately embed supports for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities and will include test questions that vary from the current multiple-choice and grid-in question types. In 2026, the exam will transition to a computer-adaptive test (CAT), which will tailor the questions that students receive based on their ongoing performance.

This document includes updates regarding this transition and general information to help families be better informed and prepared for the exam.

What is the SHSAT and who is eligible to take the exam?

The SHSAT is the exam used as the sole factor to determine admissions to New York City's Specialized High Schools (except LaGuardia High School, whose admissions are determined through an audition process). These schools are:

- Bronx High School of Science

- Brooklyn Latin School

- Brooklyn Technical High School

- High School for Math, Science and Engineering at City College

- High School of American Studies at Lehman College

- Queens High School for Sciences at York College

- Staten Island Technical High School

- Stuyvesant High School

All current New York City residents in 8th grade or in 9th grade for the first time who plan to apply to one of these Specialized High Schools (SHS) must take the SHSAT, whether they are public, private, or parochial school students. The SHSAT is administered in the fall for admission to SHS in the following school year (i.e., students seeking admission for September 2027 will take the test in fall 2026). It is administered at students' home schools during specified school days or at testing sites on pre-determined weekends. More information is available on the Office of Student Enrollment's Specialized High Schools website[1].

Why is the SHSAT moving to a digital format?

The SHSAT is adapting to align with recent developments across the testing landscape, as exams have increasingly moved from paper- to computer-based formats. For example, starting in 2024, the

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https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade/specialized-high-schools

New York State Education Department (NYSED) began a three-year transition of the New York State Grades 3 – 8 English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science Tests that will end in all subjects and grades being administered and scored on a computer by 2026. In addition, in 2023 the PSAT and in 2024 the SAT moved to digital models. These high-stakes administrations join the numerous digital classroom assessments that students sit for on a regular basis. The transition from paper to computer is motivated by the increased support, security, and convenience that accompany digital-based models.

When is the SHSAT moving to a digital format?

The timeline for the transition is as follows:

- Fall 2025: The exam will be administered in a digital format and will include tech-enhanced item types, as well as embedded supports, including those for English Language Learners and students with disabilities. The layout of the test and the number of items will remain the same.

  - This administration is for students who are applying to Specialized High Schools for the 2026 – 27 school year.

- Fall 2026: The SHSAT will be administered in a computer-adaptive format.

  - This administration is for students who are applying to Specialized High Schools for the 2027 – 28 school year.

What is changing in 2025?

Content and item types:

The 2025 exam will largely be the same as previous years: there will be two sections, one for ELA and one for math, with each part consisting of 57 items. Students who do not have an extended-time testing accommodation will have three hours to complete the exam. Students will be able to choose which section (ELA or Math) they begin with, and they will be able to go back to questions until they submit their responses at the end of the test. The key difference between the 2025 exam and previous versions is that it will be administered on a computer rather than via paper.

While the number of questions across both subjects will remain consistent with previous paper-based administrations, tech-enhanced items (TEI) will begin replacing a select number of multiple-choice or grid-in questions. These test questions will provide alternative ways to assess students' understanding. Sample TEI that may appear on the 2025 exam can be found **here**[2]. (NOTE: This resource reflects the nature of the item types without reflecting the kind of rigorous content that will appear on the exam.)

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[2] https://pwsblobprd.schools.nyc/prd-pws/docs/default-source/default-document-library/tei-screenshots-for-doe-final-w-logo-01-31-25.pdf

Universal Accessibility Features and Testing Accommodations:

This computer-based administration will enable test takers to take advantage of tech-enhanced features. For example, ELLs will be able to utilize embedded glossaries for both the ELA and the Math sections in Arabic, Bengali, French, Haitian-Creole, Korean, Chinese (traditional and simplified), Russian, Spanish, and Urdu. The glossed terms will better enable students who benefit from ELL supports to demonstrate their abilities. In addition, the exam will include universal accessibility features, such as zoom, highlighting, or note-taking features, which all students will be able to utilize. Students who have testing accommodations like tests read, breaks, or large print will also be able to receive these supports via the testing platform.

Functionality:

In 2025, students will be able to navigate the digital version of the exam in the same way that they respond on the paper-based test. They will be able to choose which subject they prefer to start with, ELA or Mathematics, and they will be able to move back and forth among the questions and between the subjects. They will just respond on a computer rather than on paper. Students who want to experience the functionality of the exam can click on this **Student Readiness Tool (SRT) tutorial**[3].

What is changing in 2026?

Content and item types:

The content of the 2026 exam will remain consistent with previous years. Students will continue to have a standard testing time of three hours to complete the exam. Students may use their discretion as to how this time is allotted across the English Language Arts and Mathematics sections. Additional and different kinds of TEI may continue to be added in 2026 and beyond.

Universal Accessibility Features and Testing Accommodations:

Supports that are available starting with the 2025 administration will continue to be available for all following administrations. (See "What is changing in 2025?" above for details.)

Functionality:

Beginning with the fall 2026 administration, the SHSAT will transition to a computer-adaptive test (CAT). A CAT is an exam that selects the questions that a student sees based on their ongoing performance. For example, a test-taker who performs well on a moderately challenging prompt will then receive a more difficult item; a student who does not answer such an item correctly will then be asked a less difficult question. Students will all be tested on the same grade-level standards, but the level of complexity of each question will be dependent upon the preceding response. Students will not be tested on standards that are above-grade level. Students will not be able to revisit

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[3] https://srt.testnav.com/ny-shsat/ny-shsat-srt.html

questions or move around within sections and will need to respond to advance in the exam. All students will answer the same number of questions for each subject.

In addition, for passage-based question sets in the ELA section, students will be able to return to questions within the set and alter their responses; once they complete and submit all questions in the set, they cannot review their responses. In the Math section and for stand-alone items in the ELA section, students must respond to each question before they will be able to move on to the next question. Students will not be able to return to the question after they have advanced in these sections. Once they complete and submit their responses in each subject, they will not be able revisit the questions for that subject.

Will students be able to take a practice test on the administration platform?

Yes, in addition to the tutorial, in the spring of 2025, two fully functional online practice tests will be available. Similar to the paper-based full-length practice tests that have been available previously, these sample exams will provide students with an opportunity to take a practice version of the exam that mirrors the actual exam in both form and content. The tutorial and unique practice tests will be accessible every year directly through a web browser, so no special software is required to practice with the content or features of the exam.

Will there be a paper version of the exam?

Paper exams will be available for the extremely limited number of students who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 plans with approved testing accommodations that require paper versions in order for the students to access the exam. Otherwise, all exams will be administered on the computer per the timeline noted above, without exception.

Will accommodations continue to be available for students with disabilities and English Language Learners?

Yes. Students with disabilities will be provided with the accommodations listed in their IEPs or 504 plans, unless the accommodation is not permitted on the SHSAT or is not needed on the SHSAT. ELLs and former ELLs taking the SHSAT are entitled to extended testing time and use of bilingual glossaries. The only difference is that, beginning in 2025, most accommodations will be delivered via the computer.

How will the test be scored?

The way in which the exam will be scored remains unchanged from previous years.

There are three types of scores that result from the SHSAT scoring process. The ELA and Math sections of the SHSAT are treated separately in the scoring process until the end when the ELA and Math scores are added together for the final score, called the composite score.

- Raw Score: SHSAT scores are based on the number of correct answers marked on scored questions, which is called a raw score.

- When the number correct is counted, every question counts the same—one raw score point.

- It doesn't matter which particular questions you get right or wrong within each section (ELA and Math). You should not spend too much time on any one question because a question that you find 'harder' won't get you more raw score points than one that you find 'easier.'

- There is no penalty for wrong answers.

- Scaled Score: Because there are several forms of the SHSAT, raw scores from different test forms cannot be compared directly. The test forms are developed to be as similar as possible, but they are not identical. To make valid score comparisons, a raw score must be converted into another type of score that takes into account the differences between test forms. The conversion from raw score to scaled score is done separately for each section (ELA and Math). Two conversions are used to convert the ELA and Math raw scores into scaled scores. Those conversions are:

  - Calibration: Calibration takes into account any small differences between different test forms.

  - Normalization: Normalization adjusts scores to fit a normal (Gaussian) distribution. Both calibration and normalization are non-linear. As a result, the raw scores and scaled scores are not proportional. That means that an increase in one raw score point does not always lead to the same increase in scaled score points. For example, in the middle of the range of scores, an increase of one raw score point may correspond to an increase of three or four scaled score points. At the top or bottom of the range of scores, an increase of one raw score point may correspond to 10–20 scaled score points. The closer you are to getting every question in a section right (or every question wrong), the more your scaled score goes up (or down) for that section.

- Composite Score: The composite score is the sum of the ELA and Math scaled scores. The composite score is used to determine admission to a Specialized High School. The composite score, in conjunction with students' Specialized High Schools preferences (as entered in MySchools) and seat availability, is used to determine admissions to Specialized High Schools.

The scoring process (calibration and normalization) for the SHSAT is redone every year specifically for that year's test. This ensures that a student's score is calculated and compared only with the other students who took the SHSAT in the same year. Because of this, SHSAT scores cannot be directly compared between years and there is no set minimum or maximum score. The maximum score on each section is usually around 350 and the maximum composite score is usually around 700; however, the actual maximum and minimum scores change from year to year.

Where will students take the exam?

Students will take the exam on DOE-provided computers either at their home school during a School Day administration or at a testing site on one of the designated weekend administration dates. Students may not use their own computers or sit for the exam at a location that is not specified by the DOE.

Will students and families have an opportunity to review their exams after scores are released?

Yes. As in previous years once scores are released, visit this webpage when you receive your child's score and complete the SHSAT Family Survey to sign up for a test view appointment. If you have any questions, please email SHSATtestviews@schools.nyc.gov.