

How will the Maryland High School Assessments affect me?

If you're a Maryland student, you're probably wondering how the Maryland High School Assessments will affect you. The questions and answers below explain the testing program and what it means for you. If you don't find the answers to your questions here, ask your teacher, guidance counselor, or parent for help. Also, the www.marylandpublicschools.org Web site is a good source of information.

1. What are the HSA?

The abbreviation HSA stands for *Maryland High School Assessments*. The HSA are a series of four tests: English 10, algebra/data analysis, biology, and government. You will take each test after you take the course.

2. Do I have to pass the HSA in order to graduate?

If you will graduate from high school before 2009, you are not required to pass the HSA in order to earn a Maryland High School Diploma. You are required to take the tests, and your scores will be reported on your high school transcript so that future employers and colleges will be able to review your performance on the tests. You must also meet the state's credit, service-learning, and attendance requirements as well as any local school system requirements. Talk with your guidance counselor to make sure you are on track to meet your school system's requirements.

If you will graduate from high school in or after 2009, you are required to earn a satisfactory score on the HSA in order to earn a Maryland High School Diploma. There are several ways that you can fulfill this requirement:

- Pass all four HSA. The passing scores are: algebra/data analysis (412), government (394), biology (400). The English 10 passing score will be set in fall 2005.

OR

- Earn passing scores on state-approved substitute tests and substitute one or more of those scores for passing scores on the HSA. The state has yet to name

acceptable substitute tests, but possibilities include the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate tests.

OR

- Earn a minimum score on each test **and** earn the minimum combined score. The minimum score for each test will be lower than the passing scores but will represent an acceptable level of achievement on the test. The minimum combined score will be equal to the total of all HSA passing scores. The Maryland State Department of Education has not established the minimum scores yet. This combined-score option allows you to offset lower performance on one test with higher performance on another test.

You must also meet all credit, service-learning, and attendance requirements as well as any local school system requirements. Talk with your guidance counselor to make sure you are on track to meet your school system's requirements.

3. Am I still required to pass the Maryland Functional tests?

No. The last graduating class required to pass the Maryland Functional Tests was the class of 2004. The Functional Tests have been replaced by the HSA.

Maryland's Functional Tests were created in the 1980s to measure basic skills. In fact, most students took the Functional Tests in middle school. The purpose of these tests was to make sure Maryland graduates had the skills necessary to complete activities like balancing a checkbook or following directions in a cookbook.

As a high school graduate in the 21st century, you will need to know more and be able to do more than basic tasks if you are to succeed in life. Today's colleges and employers expect more from high school graduates, and Maryland wants to prepare you for success, whether you plan to go on to college or begin your career immediately. The HSA make sure students graduate with higher skills and knowledge than the Functional Tests required.

4. If I'm not required to pass the HSA to graduate, does it matter how well I do on the tests?

Even if you are not required to pass the tests, your HSA performance will be included on your high school transcript. Colleges and employers usually review transcripts before they will admit you to their school or offer you a job. So you'll want them to see a score that reflects your best effort on the tests.

5. How soon will I get my scores?

Approximately nine weeks after the test is given, the state will send all students' scores to their school system. The school system will then send the scores to parents.

6. How can I prepare for the HSA?

The best preparation for the HSA takes place all through the school year: completing classwork and homework assignments, paying attention during class and asking questions, studying for tests and quizzes. Here are a few additional ways that you can prepare for the HSA.

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- **Pay attention to organization and study skills.**
The HSA cover content from an entire course, so you'll want to organize all your notes for the year and be able to make connections between the information covered in each unit.
- **Brush up on your writing skills.**
Portions of the HSA require a written answer. Plus, no matter what your plans are after graduation, you will need to know how to write well.
- **Manage your time carefully.**
One study found that good time-management skills predicted good grades in college better than SAT scores.
- **Take the Maryland School Assessment seriously.**
The Maryland School Assessment, given in grades 3 through 8 and grade 10, is good practice for the kinds of skills you'll need in high school.

7. What if I don't pass a test?

If you are graduating before 2009, you're not required to pass the HSA. If you are required to pass the tests and don't pass one or more HSA, then your teachers will explain how you can receive extra help. Once you've had an opportunity to review the material and have received extra help in the subject, you may take retake the test the next time it is being given.

8. What if I'm absent on test day?

If you're absent during testing, you must make up the test on the make-up dates. (Your teacher will tell you when they are.) Unless you're sick, you should make every effort to come to school during testing.

9. What kinds of questions will be on the HSA?

The HSA format is a combination of multiple-choice and short- and long-essay questions. Also, some questions require a "student-produced response," which means you will have to shade in your answer on a special grid. (You may have heard your teacher call this type of question a "grid-in.") There are many examples of HSA test questions on the Web at www.marylandpublicschools.org

For more information, visit www.marylandpublicschools.org. From the testing menu at the top of the page, choose High School Assessments.



www.marylandpublicschools.org

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