

# General Instructions for the PCAT Practice Tests

## The Structure of the Practice Tests

- Both PCAT Practice Tests consist of 240 multiple-choice items across five subtests. The Practice Tests also include detailed descriptions of the Writing subtest, including information about how you will be expected to compose your essays, how your essays will be scored and reported, sample Writing topics, and actual sample essays to give you an idea of what essays look like and how they are scored.
- The table below shows the structure of each Practice Test, including the number of test items in each of the five subtests, the number of test items covered by each content objective within each subtest, and the suggested time limits for each subtest.

| PCAT Practice Test                     | Number of Items | Suggested Time Limits |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Subtests and Content Objectives</b> |                 |                       |
| <b>Part 1: Verbal Ability</b>          | <b>48</b>       | 30 minutes            |
| Analogies                              | 30              |                       |
| Sentence Completion                    | 18              |                       |
| <b>Part 2: Biology</b>                 | <b>48</b>       | 30 minutes            |
| General Biology                        | 30              |                       |
| Microbiology                           | 7-9             |                       |
| Anatomy & Physiology                   | 9-11            |                       |
| <b>Part 3: Chemistry</b>               | <b>48</b>       | 30 minutes            |
| General Chemistry                      | 30-31           |                       |
| Organic Chemistry                      | 17-18           |                       |
| <b>Part 4: Reading Comprehension</b>   | <b>48</b>       | 50 minutes            |
| Comprehension                          | 14-19           |                       |
| Analysis                               | 17-20           |                       |
| Evaluation                             | 12-14           |                       |
| <b>Part 5: Quantitative Ability</b>    |                 | 40 minutes            |
| Basic Math                             | 6               |                       |
| Algebra                                | 10-12           |                       |
| Probability & Statistics               | 7-8             |                       |
| Pre-Calculus                           | 11-13           |                       |
| Calculus                               | 11-12           |                       |

- Just as on the actual PCAT, 40 of the items in each subtest are core items that count toward your score, and 8 are experimental items that do not count toward your score. All core items have appeared on actual PCAT test forms.
- A timed session in which you take each subtest in the same sitting should last about three hours, plus time to move from one subtest to another. As you begin each subtest, you will see the suggested time limit and instructions for answering the items in that section. The number of items and the suggested time limits are the same as the actual PCAT.
- Unlike the actual PCAT, no time limits are enforced on the Practice Tests. You are encouraged to time yourself using the built-in timer provided. In this way, you can attempt to duplicate the timed conditions under which you will take the actual PCAT.
- Each question on the Practice Tests has four answer choices listed, only one of which is correct. The answer to each question can be determined independently of the answers to other questions.
- On the actual PCAT, each subtest is administered and timed separately in a fixed order. On each of the Practice Tests, you will have the flexibility to complete each subtest in the order indicated, move from one to another as you choose, or view a Diagnostic Report for a subtest just completed.
- Each Subtest Diagnostic Report displays a percentile score range that is based on the number of core items answered correctly in a subtest, and based on the assumption of a timed testing session. Each Diagnostic Report also shows the numbers and percentages of core items answered correctly for the entire subtest and for each content objective within the subtest.

## Taking the Practice Tests

To take each Practice Test under the same conditions as the actual PCAT, you should do the following.

- Work on only one subtest at a time, and do not revisit work on earlier sections or proceed to subsequent subtests until the suggested time limit has elapsed.
- Do not view the correct answers or explanations for the items until you have completed all subtests.
- Try to complete a subtest before the suggested time limit expires. However, if you are unable to complete a subtest within the suggested time limit, write down how many items you had completed before the suggested time elapsed. Then answer the rest of the items in the subtest so that your Subtest Diagnostic Report will include responses to all of the items.
- On the actual PCAT, there will be one rest break halfway through the test. Because the actual PCAT includes two Writing subtests that are not included in the Practice Tests, it is recommended that you take your rest break after completing Part 3 of the Practice Tests.
- You may use scratch paper for calculations or other scratch work, but you should **not** use calculators, dictionaries, or any other aid or reference materials because these are **not** allowed on the actual PCAT.
- Try to complete the entire test in one sitting.

The percentile ranges generated from the Practice Tests are based on the assumption that you have taken each test under the conditions described above. However, the flexible structure of the Practice Tests also allows you to take it in any way you wish. If you would prefer, you may move from subtest to subtest at any time or view the correct answers and explanations for any item whenever you wish. You may also go back and forth between any parts of the Practice Test.

- When you complete each Practice Test—or if you prefer, when you complete a

subtest—you may review all of the items and view the correct answers and explanations for each item. You will **not** have the option to print out any of the Practice Test items.

- When you are finished with an individual subtest, you may choose to score your responses and view a Diagnostic Report for that subtest, or continue on to another subtest and see your scores later. As soon as you choose to see your scores for a subtest, you will be presented with a printable Diagnostic Report. When you have completed and chosen to see your scores for all five subtests, you will be presented with all five Subtest Diagnostic Reports, plus a separate Composite Diagnostic Report that includes all five subtests.

Remember, even after you choose to score the subtests, you will be able to return to any of the subtests to review your responses as much as you wish within the time remaining until the end of the PCAT test cycle, which ends with the January PCAT test date.

## Test-Taking Strategies

The following strategies are helpful for maximizing performance on the actual PCAT. These test-taking strategies apply equally well to each Practice Test if you choose to take it under conditions similar to those of the actual test:

- Be physically and mentally prepared—well rested, fed, and comfortably dressed.
- Familiarize yourself with the test by reviewing the content descriptions and sample questions that are available on the PCAT website.
- Most of the test involves knowledge, skills, and abilities accumulated over years of study and learning, so “cramming” probably will not help much.
- Work quickly but carefully, not dwelling on questions that are unfamiliar or seem too difficult. All the items count the same.
- As you answer the items, you may skip those that are most difficult and return to them as time allows. Points are not deducted from your score for incorrect responses. If you are unsure which answer choice is correct for an item, first eliminate as many incorrect options as you can. Then if you still have doubts about the response to an item, use your best judgment. For items that you choose to review, change an initial response only if you have a valid reason for doing so. Your “instinctive” response to an item may often be correct.

## Using the Practice Test Website

The key thing to remember while taking each Practice Test is that you have the flexibility to decide how you want to take it. You may move freely from subtest to subtest so that you get the best possible learning experience to prepare for the actual PCAT. Once you are finished, you may view and print out your Diagnostic Reports.

Note that to use all of the functionality available on the Practice Test website, you will need to disable any pop-up blockers on your browser. If you have active pop-up blockers, you may not be able to open the “Get Answer/Explanation” for an item or view your Diagnostic Report unless you hold down the “Ctrl” key when you click on the hyperlink.

- **Navigation Panel:** You will notice a navigation panel on the left side of the screen. Using the hyperlinks there, you can move to any subtest at any time, or to any other page listed.
1. My Profile—Shows you the personal information that you entered when you registered and your test history and progress.
  2. Instructions—Displays these instructions for taking each Practice Test.

3. Parts 1–5—Links to each of the five multiple-choice subtests.
4. Final Review—Takes you to lists of all of the items answered correctly by subtest.
5. Writing (Sample Essays)—Presents you with descriptions of the PCAT Writing subtest and how it is scored, some sample essay topics, and sample essays that illustrate each score point.
6. Score Interpretation—Takes you to information to help you interpret your Diagnostic Score Reports.

- **The Subtests:** Each time you navigate to a subtest, you will be presented with the first item for that subtest.
  1. You also may use the “Common Tasks” panel, located in the upper left corner of the screen, at any time. This panel gives you quick access to tasks, including “Get Answer/Explanation” and “Go To Review.”
  2. To move from question to question, use the “Previous” and “Next” hyperlinks at the bottom of the screen (not your browser back and forward buttons). When viewing the last question for a subtest, clicking “Next” will direct you to a review screen for that subtest.
  3. At the top of each item, you can check the “Bookmark” checkbox to indicate items that you want to return to from the “Review Subtest” screen.
  4. From the “Review Subtest” screen, you may choose to either return to questions for review, score the subtest, clear all bookmarks, or go on to the next subtest.
- **The Diagnostic Reports:** After completing a subtest, you will have the option to view a printable Subtest Diagnostic Report or continue to the next subtest. You may view the Diagnostic Reports for all five subtests and the Composite Diagnostic Report after completing the entire Practice Test.
- **Time-Out Rule:** Please be aware that after 20 minutes of inactivity on this website, you will be redirected to the Login page, where you will need to re-enter your username and password to continue with the Practice Test.

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<https://pearsonassessmentsupport.com/support/index.php?View=entry&EntryID=2118>