The ISEE: levels, sections and timings (2026-27)

Independent School Entrance Exam, from E3n (the ERB and EMA merger), for students entering grades 2 to 12. One test per season; three seasons (fall Aug-Nov, winter Dec-Mar, spring/summer Apr-Jul). Questions / minutes.

Level	Who	Sections	Total
Primary 2	Applying to grade 2	Reading 24 / 27 min; Mathematics 24 / 26 min	53 min + a 10-min break
Primary 3	Applying to grade 3	Reading 24 / 28 min; Mathematics 24 / 26 min	54 min + a break
Primary 4	Applying to grade 4	Reading 28 / 30 min; Mathematics 28 / 30 min	60 min + a break
Lower	Applying to grades 5 and 6	Verbal Reasoning 34 / 20; Quantitative Reasoning 38 / 35; Reading Comprehension 25 / 25; Mathematics Achievement 30 / 30; Essay 1 prompt / 30	2 h 20 min + two 10-min breaks
Middle	Applying to grades 7 and 8	Verbal Reasoning 40 / 20; Quantitative Reasoning 37 / 35; Reading Comprehension 36 / 35; Mathematics Achievement 47 / 40; Essay 1 prompt / 30	2 h 40 min + two breaks
Upper	Applying to grades 9 to 12	Verbal Reasoning 40 / 20; Quantitative Reasoning 37 / 35; Reading Comprehension 36 / 35; Mathematics Achievement 47 / 40; Essay 1 prompt / 30	2 h 40 min + two breaks

Verbal Reasoning: synonyms and sentence completion. Quantitative Reasoning: mathematical thinking with little computation. Reading Comprehension: passages. Mathematics Achievement: the grade's maths as taught. The essay is unscored and goes to the schools.

The scoring rule

[ ] Correct answers only; a wrong answer and a blank count the same. Eliminate a choice and guess; move on and come back.

[ ] Each scored section: a scaled score from 760 to 940, a percentile rank and a stanine.

[ ] Norm group: independent-school applicants to the same grade over the past three years. ISEE percentiles run 10 to 40 points below national-norm percentiles for the same student (the publisher's own warning).

[ ] 'Good' is the school's to define; the report posts online 3 to 5 days after online testing.

Percentile rank to stanine

Percentile rank	Stanine
1 to 3	1
4 to 10	2
11 to 22	3
23 to 39	4
40 to 59	5
60 to 76	6
77 to 88	7
89 to 95	8
96 to 99	9

From sciencewithshobha.com/blog/isee-test-explained-the-primary-lower-middle-and-upper-levels-with-sections-questions-and-timings-how-it-is-scored-scaled-scores-760-to-940-percentiles-and-stanines-the-formats-and-fees-isee-vs-ssat-and-how-to-prepare/ · 1-on-1 online tutoring for US families, Grade 1 to AP, free 30-minute first class.

Formats and fees, ISEE against SSAT, and the plan

Formats and fees (2026-27)

Format	Fee
At a member school (in person or school-run at home)	Primary $130; Lower, Middle, Upper $170
At an ISEE testing office	Grades 2-4: $185 group, $210 individual; grades 5-12: $225 group, $255 individual
Prometric test centre (grades 5-12, online; a parent stays)	$250
ISEE-administered at home (online, proctored; a parent at home)	Primary $185; Lower, Middle, Upper $250

Fee waivers come from the school applied to and cover the test and a preparation package.

ISEE or SSAT

	ISEE	SSAT
Levels	Primary 2-4; Lower (to 5-6); Middle (7-8); Upper (9-12)	Elementary (3-4); Middle (5-7); Upper (8-11)
Guessing	No penalty	Quarter point off per wrong answer (Middle, Upper)
Verbal	Synonyms, sentence completion	Synonyms, analogies
Maths	Quantitative Reasoning + Mathematics Achievement	Two quantitative sections
Scale	760-940 per section	440-710 / 500-800 per section
Sittings	Once per season, three seasons	Up to six Standard + one Flex

Plan

Level, season, format, registration date; schools and deadlines: _____

Practice test (What to Expect guide): section percentiles: _____

Mathematics Achievement gaps; vocabulary plan: _____

Timed sittings 2 and 3; guessing rule rehearsed: _____