# The SHSAT: sections, format and scoring

NYC Public Schools' Specialized High Schools Admissions Test: the sole factor for eight specialized high schools (LaGuardia auditions). For NYC residents in 8th grade or first-time 9th grade. Free; registered through the school counsellor in October; given in November on DOE computers.

| Section | Questions | Covers | Formats |
|---|---|---|---|
| English Language Arts | 50 (+10 unscored field-test items) | Revising and editing; reading comprehension | Multiple choice, fill in the blank, technology-enhanced |
| Mathematics | 50 (+10 unscored) | Ratios and proportions; the number system and expressions; equations and inequalities; statistics and probability; geometry | Multiple choice, fill in the blank, technology-enhanced |

Standard time 180 minutes for both sections, divided as the student likes, starting with either. ELLs and eligible former ELLs get extended time; IEP and 504 accommodations apply.

## The digital adaptive format and the scoring

[ ] Computer-adaptive since fall 2025: each question has a difficulty parameter; the estimate updates after each response and chooses what comes next.
[ ] Every question must be answered to move on; within a passage set answers can be changed until the set is submitted.
[ ] No penalty for wrong answers.
[ ] Each section's performance score becomes a scaled score; the two add to the composite used for ranking.
[ ] Offers go in descending composite order against the student's ranked choices; each school's last admitted score is published afterwards.

## Lowest qualifying scores, fall 2026 admissions (entering 9th grade)

| School | Score |
|---|---|
| Stuyvesant High School | 561 |
| High School for Mathematics, Science and Engineering at City College (HSMSE) | 539 |
| Queens High School for the Sciences at York College | 531 |
| The Bronx High School of Science | 525 |
| Staten Island Technical High School | 517 |
| High School of American Studies at Lehman College | 507 |
| Brooklyn Technical High School | 506 |
| The Brooklyn Latin School | 495 |

From sciencewithshobha.com/blog/shsat-explained-the-specialized-high-schools-admissions-test-the-two-sections-of-50-questions-in-180-minutes-the-digital-adaptive-format-how-it-is-scored-the-lowest-qualifying-scores-for-2026-by-school-the-dates-and-how-to-prepare/ · 1-on-1 online tutoring for US families, Grade 1 to AP, free 30-minute first class.

# Dates, what to study, and the plan

## 2026 dates

| Who | When | Where |
|---|---|---|
| Registered 8th graders at NYCPS middle schools | Wednesday 18 November 2026 | Their own school (school day) |
| Other registered students | 14, 15 and 21 November 2026 | A designated site by district |
| Results and offers | Spring 2027 | With the high school offer letter; Test View sign-up afterwards |

## What the sections need

[ ] Mathematics: grade 7 and 8 content taken seriously: proportions, integer and rational operations, expressions, linear equations and inequalities, statistics and probability, angles, area, volume, the Pythagorean theorem.

[ ] ELA revising and editing: sentence boundaries, agreement, modifiers, transitions, concision, sentence combining, paragraph organisation.

[ ] ELA reading: close reading of passages; what each paragraph is for; inference and evidence.

[ ] Free official material: the NYC Guide to the SHSAT (sample questions and technology-enhanced items) and the Student Handbook's two sample tests.

## Eight weeks

| Weeks | What to do |
|---|---|
| 1 | One timed sample test from the Handbook; sort the wrong answers by topic. |
| 2-5 | Mathematics gaps first (proportions, equations, geometry), then the editing rules, then reading daily. |
| 6-7 | Two timed sittings under real conditions; practise the adaptive habit: commit to each answer, leave none blank. |
| 8 | Review only; rank the schools honestly on the registration (the ranking does not change the score). |

## My plan

Test date, site and ranked schools: _____

Sample test 1: ELA and Math right out of 50 or 57: _____

Weakest math topics; weakest editing rules: _____

Sample test 2 and 3 dates: _____