

Chapter 1

Getting to Know the SSAT and ISEE

In This Chapter

- ▶ Exploring the SSAT and ISEE
 - ▶ Seeing what the SSAT is all about
 - ▶ Discovering the ins and outs of the ISEE
-

If you had a choice, you may choose a trip to the dentist over taking a standardized test like the SSAT or ISEE. Neither option is fun, but at least the dentist doesn't require you to study! Nevertheless, you're reading this book because you need to take either the SSAT or ISEE. You're taking one of these exams for entrance to a private school, and you know that your performance on the exam is important. The SSAT and ISEE aren't designed to be easy and fun, but they're important and necessary.

When you face a challenge, becoming a mini-expert on the subject is a good idea. After all, the more you know, the more likely you are to be successful. So this chapter is designed to fill you in on all the details of the tests. Before you start to study for the SSAT or ISEE, you need to know what these exams are all about, what kinds of content to expect, and how to register and prepare.

Approaching the SSAT and ISEE

When you first found out that you needed to take a test for admission to a school, you probably didn't jump for joy. No one likes taking tests, but at least at this point in your life, you're not a stranger to test days. After all, you've faced many of them in school so far.

Before you start thinking, "Great. Another test . . .," you need to realize that the SSAT and ISEE aren't like the exams you take for a particular subject in school. In fact, these tests are very different from a typical school test, and that's why you need to ramp up your knowledge about the exams before you begin to study. In the following sections, we explain the purpose of taking the SSAT or ISEE, what to expect on either test, and how to prepare for test day.

Testing your ability

The SSAT and ISEE are different from typical school exams because they're *standardized* tests, meaning that the tests are designed to test your current ability. In other words, suppose you take a math test at school. More than likely, the math test explores several concepts and skills you've learned from a chapter or unit in your book, and therefore it tests your knowledge about those concepts. The SSAT and ISEE, however, aren't designed to test your knowledge.

The purpose of the SSAT and ISEE isn't to find out how smart you are. After all, human beings are so complex that no test really is able to measure that very well. Instead, the SSAT and ISEE help school administrators and admissions officers determine your current *ability* with a limited number of school subjects. Knowing your ability helps them determine your likelihood for success in their private school.



Unfortunately, all standardized tests (including college admission tests, like the SAT and ACT) aren't just about your current ability; they're also about your skill in test taking. To do well on the SSAT and ISEE, you have to know *how* to take the test. That's why this book is so important. We review content you need to know, but we also focus heavily on how to take the test so you can do as well as possible.

Knowing what to expect from test questions

Of course, the big question you want to know is what kinds of questions you'll see on the SSAT and ISEE. The good news is the exams are similar, and they don't test a lot of different things. The exams stick to a few basic categories: verbal, reading comprehension, math, and a writing sample. All the questions are multiple-choice except for the Writing section. This book focuses on the content you'll see, the kinds of questions you'll likely be asked, how to tackle those questions, and how to get the best score possible.

Another big question you may have is which test you should take. We answer that question this way: Suppose you're about to buy a new car. You're trying to decide between a Ford or Chevy, so which one should you pick? In truth, the decision is really yours. After all, they're both cars, and they do essentially the same thing. You just have to decide which one is best for you. In the same way, the SSAT and ISEE are both standardized tests designed to help you get into the school of your choice. They do the same thing, so it really comes down to deciding which test is best for you.



You may be applying to a school that requires one test over the other, but if you have a choice, you just need to check out the differences in the tests and make a decision. So turn to the "Getting to Know the SSAT" and "Scoping Out the ISEE" sections in this chapter to find out some specifics about each test.

Preparing yourself: Practice makes perfect

Okay, so you probably won't make a perfect score on either exam, but we wrote this book to help you do your very best. With that thought in mind, study the chapters carefully, try every practice question in every chapter, and take every practice test in the book. Additionally, you can take real practice tests from the good folks who write the SSAT and ISEE; just go to www.ssat.org and www.erblearn.org, respectively. Try the practice tests. If you have a choice of which test you can take for your desired school, try them both and see how you score on each one. You may find that you have an edge with one exam over the other, so by all means, take the test on which you perform best. However, some schools require a certain test, so be sure to check with an admissions officer at your desired school so you know what's required.

Getting to Know the SSAT

The SSAT (Secondary School Admission Test), developed by the Secondary School Admission Test Board (SSATB), explores your ability in a few distinct key areas. If you think about everything you know at this point in your life, you'll quickly realize that you've gathered massive amounts of information about all kinds of subjects. Not only that, but also you've learned to do all kinds of things. When you think about how much you really know, you'll quickly see that the SSAT tests very little of your knowledge. In fact, the SSAT focuses on a few subjects, divided into the following four basic sections:

- ✔ **Verbal:** The Verbal section tests your vocabulary mastery, verbal reasoning (also called *analogy*) skills, and your ability to relate ideas within the English language. Chapters 3 through 5 explore the Verbal section of the test and give you plenty of opportunities to practice sample questions.
- ✔ **Quantitative:** The Quantitative sections (or more easily, Math sections) test your ability to solve arithmetic, elementary algebra, and geometry problems. You answer both direct questions and word-based questions. Chapters 10 through 16 explore all these kinds of questions and present a bunch of practice questions as well.
- ✔ **Reading Comprehension:** The Reading Comprehension section of the exam tests your ability to read and understand a passage. You read a sample passage, answer a few questions about it, and then move on. You can find out about reading comprehension in Chapters 6 and 7.
- ✔ **Writing Sample:** The SSAT includes a Writing section as well. For this section, you write an essay based on the prompt, or topic, given to you. The Writing section of the test isn't scored; it's simply sent on to the school(s) to which you're applying for review. You need to do well on the Writing section because the school you want to attend is going to review it. You can find out how to ace the writing sample in Chapters 8 and 9.

That's it! The SSAT limits its questions to these four categories. You're not directly tested on your knowledge of science, social studies, art, music, technology, or anything else. The SSAT is strictly a language, math, reading, and writing exam. With the exception of the Writing section, all questions are multiple-choice.

In the following sections, we dig a little deeper into the structure of the test, how it's scored, how to register for the exam, and what you can and can't bring to the testing center on test day.

Exploring the structure of the SSAT

Each section of the SSAT has a time limit, which is common with standardized tests. If you had all the time you wanted, the test would certainly be easier because you could think more carefully and work at your own pace. But you don't have all the time in the world; for each section of the test, you have to contend with a time limit. Table 1-1 shows you how the SSAT is organized into sections and their corresponding time limits.

| <i>Section</i> | <i>Questions</i> | <i>Time Limit</i> |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Writing | One writing prompt | 25 minutes |
| Quantitative | Two sections: 25 questions each, consisting of a mixture of different kinds of questions | 30 minutes for each section |
| Reading Comprehension | One section: 40 questions based on about 7 reading passages | 40 minutes |
| Verbal | One section: 30 synonym and 30 analogy questions | 30 minutes |

When you think about this table for a moment, you may get a sinking feeling. You're probably thinking, "Wait! I have 60 questions on the Verbal section and only 30 minutes? That's only 30 seconds per question!" Exactly. You may also realize that you have 40 reading comprehension questions but only one minute per question, not including the time it takes to read the passages.

As you can see, the time limit will be a struggle, but don't worry: We explore tactics in Chapters 2 and 4 and throughout the book to help you make the most of your time.

Separating the upper and lower level SSAT

The SSAT has two different versions — a lower level test and an upper level test. The only difference between these two levels is the difficulty. The lower level test questions are tailored for students currently in grades 5 through 7, and the upper level test is tailored for students currently in grades 8 through 11. Other than that, the tests are exactly the same in terms of the sections, number of questions, and time limits.

Scoring the SSAT

As we noted earlier, the Writing section of the SSAT isn't scored; your essay is simply sent to the school(s) to which you're applying for review. The rest of the exam is scored, however, and is also sent to the desired schools. The following sections explain how the questions are graded, what exactly is sent to your desired school(s), and how the schools use your scores.

How questions are graded

When you take the SSAT, you answer a series of multiple-choice questions across several different sections (described earlier in this section). Like all tests you take, the idea is to get as many questions correct as possible. However, that's where the similarity ends. Questions aren't just counted right or wrong, so it's not that simple.

Each section of the SSAT is graded in the following ways:

- ✓ For every question you answer correctly, you get 1 point.
- ✓ For each question you answer incorrectly, 1/4 point is deducted.
- ✓ Questions you leave blank aren't scored; they don't count as right or wrong.





At first glance, you may think you should answer every question you're sure about and simply avoid questions you're not sure about or don't know. However, it's not that simple because educated guessing can really help raise your score. In fact, the process of elimination in multiple-choice questions and educated guessing are both major players in getting the best score possible. We explore this technique in detail in Chapter 2.

What is sent to your school

After you finish the SSAT, your percentage of correct answers is calculated into what's called a *scaled score*. A scaled score just means that your raw score is reported in such a way that it has a meaningful relationship to the scores of others who take the test. So for the lower level test (grades 5 through 7), the three Verbal, Quantitative, and Reading Comprehension sections all receive a scaled score of 440 to 710, for a total scaled score range of 1320 to 2130.

For the upper level test (grades 8 through 11), the three Verbal, Quantitative, and Reading Comprehension sections receive a scaled score of 500 to 800, for a total scaled score range of 1500 to 2400. Naturally, you want to score as high as possible on each section in order to get the highest possible total scaled score.

In addition to your total scaled score and scaled scores for each section of the exam, the following information is also reported to your school:

- ✓ **SSAT Percentile Ranks:** The SSAT ranks your performance for each category by comparing your score to the scores of other students who've taken the SSAT in the past three years. You get a ranking of 1 to 99 percent, showing where your score falls in relation to the scores of others. For example, say your percentile rank on the Reading Comprehension is 85 percent. This score means that you scored better or equal to 85 percent of the other students on the Reading Comprehension section. Naturally, the higher your percentage score, the better.
- ✓ **Estimated National Percentile Rank (NPR):** This percentile score, provided for grades 5 through 9 only, compares your score to the national student population at large, not only students who've taken the SSAT. For example, if your estimated national percentile rank is 85 percent on the Quantitative section of the test, you're estimated to score better or equal to 85 percent of all students in your grade in the nation.
- ✓ **Predicted 12th Grade SAT Score:** This report simply guesses what you're likely to make on the SAT as a 12th grader. This information is reported for students currently in grades 7 through 10 only. This predicted score doesn't mean much because it's just a guess about your future performance, so don't let it rattle you if you don't score as high as you'd hoped to in this category.

How your school uses the score

The SSAT provides some interesting information about your performance, but in the end, the only thing that really matters is how the school you're applying to uses the information. So how does that work?

Each school has its own admission standards and methods for evaluating admission candidates. A school may look at your SSAT and look for a minimum total score. They may look for specific scores on certain sections, such as Math. They may especially look at your writing sample, too.

On the other hand, some schools use a *portfolio* approach to student admission, where your SSAT is just one piece of the puzzle. They may equally weigh your performance at your previous school, letters of recommendation, or anything else they want to see in an application.

In the end, no standard way exists for how schools use the SSAT — it's all up to the individual school. Check out the admission requirements for the school(s) you're applying to and find out whether certain SSAT scores are expected or if the SSAT score is used in a more global way for admission. How your school uses your SSAT score is completely at its discretion.

Registering for the SSAT

Several important things you need to know about registering for the SSAT include registration information, dates, and fees. Because these factors are always changing, be sure to check out www.ssat.org. Here, you can find out the latest information about registering for a test, and you can even register online.



The three types of SSAT test administrations are

- ✔ **SSAT National Test:** *National test* simply means that the test is given on a particular Saturday at many testing sites in the United States, Canada, and at other international locations. The national test is given eight different times a year; you can take the national test several times if you're trying to hit a certain score. In fact, you can take it every time it's offered. You can register for a national test by mail, fax, and online. You can also register late if space is available, although additional fees may apply.
- ✔ **SSAT Flex Test:** A *flex test* is a group of tests or an individual test given on any other date besides a national test date. A particular school or educational consultant may require you to take a flex test (it's not something you can simply choose to do on your own). If you're required to take a flex test, you can take the test only one time in a given year. See your school administrators or consultant for information about registering for a flex test.
- ✔ **SSAT Regional Flex Test:** Some regional *consortia* (a group of schools) offer the SSAT on a specific date other than the national test date. These schools may get together and offer the test one time at a particular testing location. The same flex test rules apply to a regional flex test, so get more information from your school if a flex test is required.



If you observe a Saturday Sabbath, you can register to take the test on Sunday instead of Saturday. The SSAT website provides information about how to register for a Sunday exam as well. After registration is complete, you'll receive an admission ticket, which allows you to enter the testing center.



Knowing what to bring to the SSAT testing center

When you take the SSAT, the last thing you want to do is forget something you need or bring something you shouldn't. So make sure you bring the following items with you:

- ✔ **SSAT admission ticket:** You receive your SSAT admission ticket when you register for the test. Be sure to put it in a safe place and don't forget where that is.
- ✔ **Birth certificate, Social Security card, school report card, school ID, passport, driver's license, or green card:** You need to bring only one of these items with you, which verifies your identity and shows the test administrators that you are who you say you are and not someone else taking the test for you.
- ✔ **Two sharpened #2 pencils:** Make sure the pencils are #2 (this distinction is often labeled on the box and the pencil itself) because other kinds may not be read correctly by the scoring machine.

- ✓ **A good eraser:** The last thing you want to happen is to not be able to erase an answer choice you marked incorrectly, so either make sure your pencils have good erasers on them or bring an additional one.
- ✓ **Two blue or black pens:** The test requires you to write your essay in pen, so be sure to bring a couple blue or black pens that work well.
- ✓ **A jacket or sweater:** Because you never know what the temperature will be in the testing room, wearing a short-sleeved shirt and having a jacket or sweater to layer with is a good idea. That way, you can adjust your clothing so you're comfortable. Students who are cold or too warm often don't do as well on exams, so keep this point in mind.



Just as importantly, you want to make sure you *don't* bring any of these items to the testing center — if you do, you may be sent home:

- ✓ Books
- ✓ Calculator
- ✓ Paper (including scratch paper; the testing center provides scratch paper for the test)
- ✓ Phone
- ✓ Watch with alarm
- ✓ Any other electronic devices

Also, no visitors are allowed in the testing room, so you'll have to leave your kid brother at home.



Most exams begin at 9 a.m. and end around 12 p.m. Check your admission ticket for details and make sure you arrive at least 30 minutes early so you have plenty of time to check in and get ready for the test. You may not be allowed to take the test if you're late, so make sure you get there early!

Scoping Out the ISEE

The ISEE (Independent School Entrance Exam) is developed and administered by the Educational Records Bureau, which has existed since 1927. Like the SSAT, the ISEE is a standardized test, which means that its goal is to test your achievement level based on the performance of other students in your grade level. What's important to remember is the ISEE isn't an IQ test or anything like that. It doesn't measure how smart you are or your potential for success in the future. It's simply a tool to see how much you've achieved in school so far.



Like the SSAT and other aptitude tests, the ISEE indirectly tests your ability to perform well on a test. In other words, you not only need to know some math and English to do well on the ISEE, but you also need some skills and tactics to take the test itself. That's why we wrote this book. We review content you need to know, but we also focus heavily on how to take the test so you can do as well as possible.

In the following sections, we explore all there is to know about the ISEE, including a breakdown of the questions and sections on the test, the different levels of the ISEE, how the test is scored, how you go about registering for the exam, and what you should and shouldn't bring with you to the testing center.

Understanding what's on the ISEE

Quick — when did Cortez conquer the Aztec empire? Not sure? Don't worry; you won't see questions like this on the ISEE. Actually, the ISEE tests very little of what you already know. The exam focuses only on your ability to read and answer questions about the reading passages, to handle English language questions, to write effectively, and to solve math questions. With those ideas in mind, the ISEE is divided into four basic sections:

- ✔ **Verbal Reasoning:** The Verbal section tests your vocabulary mastery and your ability to relate ideas within the English language. Chapters 3 through 5 explore the Verbal section of the test and give you plenty of opportunities to practice sample questions.
- ✔ **Math (Quantitative Reasoning and Mathematics Achievement):** The Math sections test your ability to solve arithmetic, elementary algebra, and geometry problems. You answer both direct questions and word-based questions. The exam breaks all these concepts into two different sections so you don't have to answer every math question at one time. Chapters 10 through 16 explore all these kinds of questions and present a bunch of practice questions as well.
- ✔ **Reading Comprehension:** The Reading Comprehension section of the exam tests your ability to read and understand a passage. You read a sample passage, answer a few questions about it, and then move on. You can find out about reading comprehension in Chapters 6 and 7.
- ✔ **Essay:** The ISEE includes an Essay section as well. For this section, you write an essay based on the prompt, or topic, given to you. Like the SSAT, the Essay section of the test isn't scored; it's simply sent on to the school(s) to which you're applying for review. You need to do well on the Essay section because the school you want to attend is going to review it. You can find out how to ace the writing sample in Chapters 8 and 9.

That's it! The ISEE limits its questions to these four categories. You're not directly tested on your knowledge of science, social studies, art, music, technology, or anything else. The ISEE is strictly a language, math, reading, and writing exam. With the exception of the Essay section, all questions are multiple-choice.

Comparing the upper, middle, and lower level ISEE



The ISEE is a little different from the SSAT because it has three versions: The upper level test is for students entering grades 9 through 12; the middle level test is for students entering grades 7 and 8; and the lower level test is for students entering grades 5 and 6. So what's the difference between the three? The upper level test is more difficult and the middle and lower tests are progressively easier. The only other difference is the upper and middle level tests include *quantitative comparison questions* in the Quantitative section, which are absent from the lower level test. (Quantitative comparison questions are math questions that ask you to compare the sizes, or quantities, of two mathematical expressions.) Other than that, the tests are exactly the same in terms of the number and types of sections, although they do vary just a bit with the number of questions on each level.

Each section of the ISEE has a time limit, which is common for all standardized tests. If you had all the time you wanted, you'd probably score higher because you could work at your own pace. But you don't have all the time in the world; for each section of the test, you have to contend with a time limit. Take a look at the next three sections that show you what you can expect on each level of the ISEE. Although the time limit will be a struggle, don't worry: We explore tactics throughout the book to help you make the most of your time (check out Chapters 2 and 4 for details).

Upper level ISEE

The upper level ISEE (for grades 9 through 12) is divided into five parts with a total testing time of 2 hours and 40 minutes. Table 1-2 breaks down the sections in this test.

| Section | Questions | Time Limit |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Verbal Reasoning | 40 questions | 20 minutes |
| Quantitative Reasoning | 37 questions | 35 minutes |
| Reading Comprehension | 36 questions based on about 6 reading passages | 35 minutes |
| Mathematics Achievement | 47 questions | 40 minutes |
| Essay | One writing prompt | 30 minutes |

Middle level ISEE

The middle level ISEE (for grades 7 and 8) is divided into five parts with a total testing time of 2 hours and 40 minutes. Table 1-3 shows you what to expect.

| Section | Questions | Time Limit |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Verbal Reasoning | 40 questions | 20 minutes |
| Quantitative Reasoning | 37 questions | 35 minutes |
| Reading Comprehension | 36 questions based on about 6 reading passages | 35 minutes |
| Mathematics Achievement | 47 questions | 40 minutes |
| Essay | One writing prompt | 30 minutes |

Lower level ISEE

The lower level ISEE exam (for grades 5 and 6) is divided into five parts with a total testing time of 2 hours and 20 minutes. Check out Table 1-4 to see how many questions are in each section and what the time limits are.

| Section | Questions | Time Limit |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Verbal Reasoning | 34 questions | 20 minutes |
| Quantitative Reasoning | 38 questions | 35 minutes |
| Reading Comprehension | 25 questions based on about 5 reading passages | 25 minutes |
| Mathematics Achievement | 30 questions | 30 minutes |
| Essay | One writing prompt | 30 minutes |

Scoring the ISEE

As we noted earlier, the Essay section of the ISEE isn't scored, but the essay is sent to the school(s) to which you're applying for review. The rest of the exam's scores are also sent to the desired schools. The scores and writing sample may be sent to up to six schools or counselors. However, if you want to send the scores to more than six schools or counselors, you can do so for an additional fee. After the test, the scores are typically sent to schools and counselors within 7 to 10 days.

The following sections explore a few issues you need to know: how questions are graded, what exactly is sent to your desired school(s), and how schools use your scores.

How questions are graded

When you take the ISEE, you answer a series of multiple-choice questions across several different sections. Like all tests you take, the idea is to get as many questions correct as possible. The good news is the ISEE doesn't penalize you for guessing. In other words, if you answer a question incorrectly or if you skip it, you don't lose points. You only get points for questions that are answered correctly. So your best bet is to try and answer as many questions as you possibly can. Even if you don't know the exact answer to a question, you can still guess the correct answer and may earn points that way.

Because the exam is mostly a multiple-choice exam, guessing and the process of elimination are tools that can help you increase your score. We explore this technique in detail in Chapter 2.

What is sent to your school

After you finish the ISEE, your percentage of correct answers is calculated into what's called a *scaled score*. This just means that your raw score (the number of questions you answered correctly) is reported in such a way that it has a meaningful relationship to the scores of all others who take the test. ISEE scaled scores for each section of the test range from 760 to 940; the higher the score, the better.

In addition to your total scaled score and scaled scores for each section of the exam, the following information is also reported to your school:

- ✔ **ISEE Percentile Ranks:** The ISEE ranks your performance for each category by comparing your score to the scores of other students who've taken the ISEE in the past three years. You get a ranking of 1 to 99 percent, showing where your score falls in relation to the scores of others. For example, say your percentile rank on the Reading Comprehension is 85 percent. This score means that you scored better or equal to 85 percent of the other students on the Reading Comprehension section. Naturally, the higher your percentage score, the better.
- ✔ **Stanine (standard nine):** This rank is an abbreviated version of the percentile rank. With this rank, students are divided into nine possible groupings. Stanine 1 provides a percentile rank of 1 to 3 percent; stanine 2, 4 to 10 percent; stanine 3, 11 to 22 percent; stanine 4, 23 to 39 percent; stanine 5, 40 to 59 percent; stanine 6, 60 to 76 percent; stanine 7, 77 to 88 percent; stanine 8, 89 to 95 percent; and stanine 9, 96 to 99 percent. These more general rankings aren't as specific as the percentile rank, but admissions officers sometimes use them to generally compare the performance of a group of potential students.
- ✔ **Analysis:** The ISEE also provides an analysis section that reports the number of correct questions per section as well as specific results data for different types of questions.

How your school uses the score

The ISEE provides some interesting information about your performance, but in the end, the only thing that really matters is how the school you're applying to uses the information, and each school uses ISEE scoring information in different ways.

Each school has its own admission standards and methods for evaluating admission candidates. A school may look at your ISEE and look for a minimum total score. They may look for specific scores on certain sections, such as Math. They may especially look at your writing sample, too.

On the other hand, some schools use a *portfolio* approach to student admission where your ISEE is just one piece of the puzzle. They may equally weigh your performance at your previous school, letters of recommendation, or anything else they want to see in an application.



Check out the admission requirements for the school(s) you're applying to and find out whether certain ISEE scores are expected or if the ISEE score is used in a more global way for admission. How your school uses your ISEE scores is completely at their discretion.

Registering for the ISEE

Several important things you need to know about registering for the ISEE include registration information, dates, and fees. These factors are always changing, so check out www.erblearn.org/parents/admission/isee. Here, you can find out the latest information about registering for a test, and you can even register online.



The online registration allows you to locate and register for an open test site during various times throughout the year. However, some schools have closed registrations where they test their existing students or students who are applying to the school. Always check with the school you're applying to for more information about registering for a test because closed registrations must be handled by the specific school. Just start with the school's admission officer and go from there. After you register for a test, you'll be able to reschedule the test if necessary or access additional information about inclement weather, testing accommodations, and so on.

Figuring out what to bring to the ISEE testing center

When you take the ISEE, you need to bring the following items with you to the testing center:

- ✓ **ISEE admission ticket:** You receive your ISEE admission ticket when you register for the test. Be sure to put it in a safe place and don't forget where that is.
- ✓ **Birth certificate, Social Security card, school report card, school ID, passport, driver's license, or green card:** You need to bring only one of these items with you, which verifies your identity and shows the test administrators that you are who you say you are and not someone else taking the test for you.
- ✓ **Four sharpened #2 pencils:** Make sure you bring #2 pencils (this distinction is often labeled on the box and the pencil itself) because other types of pencils may not be read by the scoring machine.

- ✔ **A good eraser:** Nothing is quite as frustrating or nerve-racking as having an eraser that doesn't erase — or not having an eraser at all. Bringing a good eraser is important so you can cleanly erase any mistakes on your answer sheet.
- ✔ **Two blue or black pens:** The ISEE requires you to write your essay in pen, so be sure to bring a couple blue or black pens that work well.
- ✔ **A snack:** The ISEE provides two five-minute breaks during the test. During a break, you may eat a small snack if you want, so bring something along in case you get hungry.
- ✔ **A jacket or sweater:** Because you never know what the temperature of the testing room will be, wearing a short-sleeved shirt and having a jacket or sweater to layer with is a good idea. That way, you can adjust your clothing so you're comfortable. Students who are cold or too warm often don't do as well on exams, so keep this point in mind.

Just as importantly, you want to make sure you *don't* bring any of these items to the testing center — if you do, you may be sent home:

- ✔ Books
- ✔ Calculator
- ✔ Paper (including scratch paper; the testing center provides scratch paper for the test)
- ✔ Phone
- ✔ Watch with alarm
- ✔ Any other electronic devices

Finally, no visitors are allowed in the testing center.



Most exams begin at 9 a.m. and end around 12 p.m. Check your admission ticket for details and make sure you arrive at least 30 minutes early so you have plenty of time to check in and get ready for the test. You may not be allowed to take the test if you're late, so make sure you get there early!