ACT, SAT, and CLT

Q-1. What is the minimum ACT score for 2026 high school graduates and does the score change every year?

A. The ACT qualifying scores for students graduating from eligible Louisiana high schools in 2026 are:

TOPS Tech – 17 or the silver level score on the assessments of the ACT WorkKeys system
TOPS Opportunity – 20
TOPS Performance – 23
TOPS Honors – 27

The minimum qualifying score for the **Opportunity Award** is determined annually based on the state's average composite ACT score reported for the prior year (the average for last year was 18.1, truncated to the nearest whole number. The minimum score may never be less than 20 and is currently 20.

NOTE: The ACT scores above are TOPS requirements. The achievement of these scores does not necessarily mean that you will meet the admissions standards of the college of your choice since some schools require minimum ACT sub-scores for admission. You should contact the admissions office for the colleges to which you will apply to verify the ACT admission requirements for those schools.

Q-2. What is the minimum ACT score for students completing a BESE-approved home-study program for 2026?

A. The ACT qualifying scores for home-study students for 2026 are:

TOPS Tech – 17
TOPS Opportunity – 20
TOPS Performance – 23
TOPS Honors – 27

NOTE: The ACT scores above are TOPS requirements. The achievement of these scores does not necessarily mean that you will meet the admission standards of the college of your choice since some schools require minimum ACT sub-scores for admission. You should contact the admissions office for the colleges to which you will apply to verify the ACT admission requirements for those schools.

Q-3. What is the minimum ACT score for 2026 graduates of out-of-state and out-of-country high schools?

A. The ACT qualifying scores for these 2026 graduates are:

TOPS Tech – 20
TOPS Opportunity – 23
TOPS Performance – 26
TOPS Honors – 30

NOTE: The ACT scores above are TOPS requirements. The achievement of these scores does not necessarily mean that you will meet the admission standards of the college of your choice since some schools require minimum ACT sub-scores for admission. You should contact the admissions office for the colleges to which you will apply to verify the ACT admission requirements for those schools.

Q-4. What is the deadline for taking the ACT/SAT/CLT?

A. You must achieve a qualifying score on or before the ACT national test date in April in the academic year you graduate from high school. If you have not previously achieved a qualifying score, you may qualify after the ACT national test date in April in the academic year you graduate from high school. Beginning with graduates of 2021, you may qualify on a test taken after the ACT national test date in April , but prior to August 1, by using May, June, and/or July test scores, including scores from a special ACT, SAT or CLT, but your period of eligibility for the award will be reduced by one semester or two quarters. You can qualify for a higher award using a score achieved after the national ACT test date in April and before August 1. **See Question 16 for important information regarding upgrading a TOPS Award with a late score.**

In very limited circumstances, an exception to the April deadline may be granted **IF** the applicant had registered for a test prior to August 1 but was prevented from taking the test prior to September 30 of the year of graduation due to circumstances beyond the immediate control of the student **AND** attributable to the administration of the test.A student will not be penalized one semester or two quarters. Students must submit an exception request form along with documentation to support that the student was registered for an ACT test that they were unable to take due to circumstances beyond the control of the student and which were attributable to the administration of the test.

Q-5. Will a score from a special ACT, SAT, or CLT taken after the official April test date but before August 1 be accepted?

A. Yes. You may use a first-time qualifying score achieved on a special ACT, SAT, or CLT test after the official April test date and before the August 1 deadline, but your eligibility will be reduced by one semester or two quarters.

Q-6. Is any type of ACT, SAT, or CLT test acceptable?

A. No. You must take an official National (includes State), International, Military, Arranged, Special, or Extended Time ACT test, or the SAT test.

Q-7. Should I include my social security number on my ACT, SAT, or CLT application?

A. ACT, Inc. no longer collects your social security number. **HOWEVER**, be sure that the name that you use on the ACT exactly matches your name on file with your high school and the name you use on the FAFSA. For example, if your high school records state that your name is John Q. Smith, your ACT and your FAFSA should use the name John Q. Smith, not John Smith, not John Quincy Smith, and not Quincy Smith. If your name differs in the slightest way in any of these documents,

the determination of your eligibility for TOPS may be delayed.

Provision of your social security number for the SAT is optional, and it is not necessary for purposes of determining your TOPS eligibility.

Q-8. How does the ACT essay component impact TOPS eligibility?

A. The essay portion of the ACT test does not impact the ACT composite score, and therefore will not affect TOPS eligibility. **However**, some colleges and universities require the essay. Check with the admissions office of the school(s) to which you intend to apply.

Q-9. Is the SAT Essay test considered in the conversion of the SAT score to an ACT score for TOPS eligibility?

A. No. The essay portion of the SAT is not considered for TOPS eligibility. **However**, many colleges and universities require taking the essay for possible admission. You should check with the admissions office of the school(s) to which you intend to apply.

Q-10. How is the ACT score reported to LOSFA?

A. LOSFA has an agreement with ACT, Inc. that requires ACT, Inc. to electronically report to LOSFA all ACT test scores for students who indicate they are a resident of Louisiana and all students who included the "La Office of Student Financ Asst" (TOPS) report code of "1595" in the list of institutions to receive the test scores when registering for the ACT.

If you take the ACT outside of Louisiana and do not include code "1595" on the list of institutions to receive test scores, you should contact ACT, Inc. to request that your scores be submitted to LOSFA.

LOSFA does not accept score reports directly from students. Score reports from the ACT must come directly from ACT, Inc., and score reports from the SAT must com directly from the College Board.

NOTE: Be sure that the name that you use on the ACT exactly matches your name on file with your high school and the name you use on the FAFSA. For example, if your high school records state that your name is John Q. Smith, your ACT and your FAFSA should use the name John Q. Smith, not John Smith, not John Quincy Smith, and not Quincy Smith. If your name differs in the slightest way in any of these documents, the determination of your eligibility for TOPS will be delayed. Your date of birth, home address, and email address must also be the same.

Q-11. Will LOSFA waive ACT scores for a child with ADD or ADHD?

A. No. The minimum ACT score is established by the TOPS statute and cannot be waived. You may apply to ACT, Inc. for special testing conditions, but you must take the test no later than the deadline. See the answers to Questions 4, 5, and 6 for the deadline.

Q-12. I listed the incorrect ACT high school code or the incorrect year of graduation or graduated from a different high school than the one I attended when I took the ACT test that resulted in the highest score. What do I do to correct this?

A. You must contact ACT, Inc. and ask them to send an official ACT score report to LOSFA by creating an account at https://services.actstudent.org/OA_HTML/actibeCAcdLogin.jsp and requesting that your ACT score be sent to LOSFA using ACT code 1595.

Q-13. Can an SAT or CLT score be used in place of an ACT score, and, if so, what is the minimum qualifying score?

A. Yes. To qualify for a TOPS award, and beginning with SAT tests in May 2018, the total of the sub-scores for the critical reading and mathematics sections of the SAT (the score for the writing section is NOT included) must be at least:

TOPS Tech – 920
TOPS Opportunity – 1030
TOPS Performance – 1130
TOPS Honors – 1260
TOPS Excellence – 1400

Beginning with high school graduates of 2025, students may use a CLT score to qualify for TOPS. The minimum scores on the CLT are as follows:

TOPS Tech – 54
TOPS Opportunity – 66
TOPS Performance – 80
TOPS Honors – 91
TOPS Excellence – 101

Q-14. What are the SAT/CLT test deadlines?

A. The SAT and CLT test deadlines for TOPS are the same as the test deadlines for the ACT, which is April in the academic year you graduate from high school, or May, June, and July with a one-semester or two-quarters reduction in eligibility for the award. See the answers to Questions 4, 5, and 6.

Q-15. How do I substitute an SAT or CLT score?

A. To substitute an SAT score, you must take the test no later than the ACT test deadline [April in the year of high school graduation or achieve a qualifying score from a May, June, or July test, which reduces your eligibility for the award by one semester or two quarters or, in certain very limited circumstances, on a test taken before September 30 (See the answer to Question 6 above.)],

and you must direct the College Board to report the score to LOSFA, or you must personally send a copy of your SAT test report to LOSFA. LOSFA uses a conversion table to determine the ACT equivalent of the SAT score. See the answer to Question 13.

When registering for the SAT, you **MUST** indicate the "TOPS-Taylor Opportunity Program For Students" code as a recipient of the score by entering code "9019" as one of the institutions to receive a score report.

If you take the SAT outside of Louisiana and do not include code "9019" on the list of institutions to receive test scores, you should send a copy of the official SAT Score Report (write your date of birth on the report) to LOSFA by mail, by fax to (225) 612-6508, or by email to custserv@la.gov.

If you take the CLT, you must select LOSFA or TOPS when selecting institutions to whom you want your score sent.

Q-16. Can I increase the level of my TOPS Award if I take the June or July ACT, SAT, or CLT?

A. Yes. You may qualify for a higher award based on the ACT or SAT score achieved on the June or July ACT or SAT test. Because the test is taken after the April national ACT test date, your eligibility for the award will be reduced by one semester or two quarters.

The TOPS Tech Award provides students with two years of TOPS funding. If you qualify for the Opportunity Award with a June or July ACT or SAT, you will be eligible to receive 7 semesters of TOPS funding.

The TOPS Opportunity, Performance, and Honors Awards provide TOPS funding for eight full-time semesters. If you qualify for a higher award with a May, June, or July ACT or SAT score, you are required by the TOPS statutes to accept the higher award, and your period of TOPS eligibility **will be reduced by one semester or two quarters**.

Examples:

TOPS Tech to TOPS Opportunity Award: Jane earned a 19 on the ACT in February of her senior year in high school. Assuming all other initial eligibility criteria are met, she will qualify for the TOPS Tech Award, which provides two full years of TOPS funding to be used for enrollment in certain programs of study aligned to workforce priorities as determined by the Board of Regents and the Workforce Investment Council. Jane retakes the ACT in June of her senior year, and she scores a 21. Jane's TOPS award will be upgraded to the TOPS Opportunity Award, and she will be eligible for 7 full-time semesters of TOPS funding to be used for enrollment in a program of study of her choosing.

TOPS Opportunity Award to TOPS Performance Award: John earned a 22 on the ACT in April of his junior year in high school. Assuming all other initial eligibility criteria are met, he will qualify for the TOPS Opportunity Award, which provides 8 full-time semesters of TOPS funding to be used in a program of study of his choice. John takes the ACT again in June immediately after he graduates from high school, and he scores a 24 on the ACT. John's TOPS award will be upgraded to the TOPS Performance Award, and he will be eligible for 7 full-time

semesters of TOPS funding plus a $200 stipend per semester to be used for enrollment in a program of study of his choosing. Depending upon the college John plans to attend, the upgrade to a TOPS Performance Award could result in him being eligible to receive less funding for his postsecondary education.

The TOPS Award Amount is based upon the tuition charged during the 2016-2017 academic year. The current TOPS Award Amount per semester at LSU is $3,731.49. If John had continued to be eligible for the TOPS Opportunity Award, he would receive $29,851.92 ($3,731.49 x 8) over a period of 8 semesters, assuming that he maintains his TOPS eligibility throughout his college career. Since John's award was upgraded to TOPS Performance with his June ACT score, he will receive a total of $27,520.43 (($3,731.49 x 7) + ($200 x 7)) over a period of 7 semesters, assuming that he maintains his eligibility for the TOPS Performance Award throughout his college career.

It is important to remember that if John does not maintain at least a 3.00 cumulative GPA on all courses taken at the end of each academic year, his TOPS award will be redesignated as the TOPS Opportunity Award, and the one semester penalty that was applied remains. Under this scenario, John's TOPS funding will be reduced even further. For example, John enrolls full time in the fall semester of 2023 and the spring semester of 2024, and his TOPS award was paid for both semesters. After the spring semester of 2024, LSU reports to LOSFA that John earned 30 hours during the academic year with a cumulative GPA of 2.95. John does not enroll in summer school, so his cumulative GPA at the end of the 2023-2024 academic year is 2.95. The TOPS statutes require that his award revert to the TOPS Opportunity Award for the remaining five semesters of his eligibility. As a result, John will receive two semesters of TOPS funding with a stipend of $200 per semester, totaling $7,862.98 (($3,731.49 x 2) + ($200 x 2)). The remaining five (5) semesters of funding total $18,657.45 ($3,731.49 x 5). Thus, the total TOPS funding for which John would be eligible is $26,520.43.

TOPS Performance Award to TOPS Honors Award: John earned a 26 on the ACT in October of his senior year in high school. Assuming all other initial eligibility criteria are met, he will qualify for the TOPS Performance Award, which provides 8 full-time semesters of TOPS funding to be used in a program of study of his choice. John takes the ACT again in June immediately after he graduates from high school, and he scores a 28 on the ACT. John's TOPS Award will be upgraded to the TOPS Honors Award, and he will be eligible for 7 full-time semesters of TOPS funding plus a $400 stipend per semester to be used for enrollment in a program of study of his choosing. Depending upon the college John plans to attend, the upgrade to a TOPS Honors Award could result in him being eligible to receive less funding for his postsecondary education.

The TOPS Award Amount is based upon the tuition charged during the 2016-2017 academic year. The current TOPS Award amount per semester at LSU is $3,731.49. If John had continued to be eligible for the TOPS Performance Award, he would receive $31,451.92 (($3,731.49 x 8) + ($200 x 8) over a period of 8 semesters, assuming that he maintains his eligibility for the TOPS Performance Award throughout his college career. Since John's award was upgraded to TOPS Honors with his June ACT score, he will receive a total of $28,920.43 (($3,731.49 x 7) + ($400 x 7)) over a period of 7 semesters, assuming that he maintains his eligibility for the TOPS Honors Award throughout his college career.

It is important to remember that if John does not maintain at least a 3.00 cumulative GPA on all courses taken at the end of each academic year, his TOPS award will be redesignated as the TOPS Opportunity Award, and the one semester penalty that was applied remains. Under this scenario, John's TOPS funding will be reduced even further. For example, John enrolls full time in the fall semester of 2023 and the spring semester of 2024, and his TOPS award was paid for both semesters. After the spring semester of 2024, LSU reports to LOSFA that John earned 30 hours during the academic year with a cumulative GPA of 2.95. John does not enroll in summer school, so his cumulative GPA at the end of the 2023-2024 academic year is 2.95. The TOPS statutes require that his award revert to the TOPS Opportunity Award for the remaining 5 semesters of his eligibility. As a result, John will receive two semesters of TOPS funding with a stipend of $400 per semester, totaling $8,262.98 (($3,731.49 x 2) + ($400 x 2)). The remaining 5 semesters of funding total $18,657.45 ($3,731.49 x 5). Thus, the total TOPS funding for which John would be eligible is $26,920.43.

NOTE: The examples provided are based on current award amounts and are illustrative only. Other scenarios are possible, and even likely. Before deciding whether to attempt to upgrade your TOPS award with a June ACT score, you should determine whether the award upgrade will provide a financial benefit to you utilizing the TOPS Award Amount at the school you plan to attend. The TOPS Award amounts, by school, can be found here.

Q-17. After I graduated from high school, I was awarded the TOPS Opportunity Award. My only qualifying ACT score was canceled during my second semester of college attendance, and I did not take the SAT or CLT. Am I still eligible for TOPS? How long will my TOPS award be paid?

A. You are no longer eligible for a TOPS award, and no further payments will be paid. You will not be required to repay any TOPS award amounts that have already been paid. The date LOSFA received notification of the ACT score being canceled will determine whether you will receive one more payment of your TOPS award. For more information, you should email LOSFA at custserv@la.gov.

Q-18. If I discover that I used an incorrect social security number on either the ACT, SAT, or CLT, what can I do to correct this?

A. You are not required to provide a social security number on the ACT, SAT, or CLT. Be sure that the name that you use on the ACT or SAT and the FAFSA exactly matches your name on file with your high school or the Louisiana Department of Education. For example, if your school records indicate your name is John Q. Smith, your ACT and your FAFSA should use the name John Q. Smith, not John Smith, not John Quincy Smith, and not Quincy Smith. If your name differs in the slightest way in any of these documents, the determination of your eligibility for TOPS will be delayed because matching your records will require manual intervention by LOSFA staff.