

The Parent's Guide to the HSPT

Everything you need to know about the test, the score report and the final week, in plain language, so you can support your child calmly and confidently.

What the HSPT is

The High School Placement Test (HSPT) is a multiple-choice test that many Catholic and private high schools use when 8th graders apply. It measures the verbal, reasoning, reading, math and language skills a student has built over the years. It is not a test of one class or one teacher. Your child takes it once, usually in the fall or winter of 8th grade, often at one of the schools they are applying to.

298

questions in total

5

separately timed subtests

~2.5 hrs

of testing (about 3 hours with breaks)

SUBTEST	QUESTIONS	MINUTES	WHAT IT COVERS
Verbal Skills	60	16	Synonyms, antonyms, analogies, logic and word relationships
Quantitative Skills	52	30	Number series, comparisons and number reasoning
Reading	62	25	Comprehension of short passages and vocabulary in context
Mathematics	64	45	Arithmetic, algebra, geometry and problem solving
Language	60	25	Usage, punctuation, capitalization, spelling and composition

Four facts worth knowing

- **There is no penalty for guessing.** A blank answer can never earn a point, so your child should answer every question.
- **Calculators are not allowed.** All math is done by hand on scratch paper or mentally.
- **The pace is fast.** Verbal Skills gives about 16 seconds per question. Timing, not difficulty, is what catches most students off guard.
- **Some schools add optional tests** (for example science, religion or mechanical aptitude). Ask each school whether it gives one and how it is used.

How schools use the scores

Every school sets its own policy, but HSPT results are commonly used in three ways:

Admission

Scores are usually one part of the application, read alongside grades, teacher recommendations, an interview and activities. Many schools look at the overall result rather than a single subtest.

Scholarships

Many schools use HSPT results to award merit scholarships or academic awards. Some have separate deadlines or extra steps, so ask early.

Placement

Many schools use subtest scores to place freshmen in honors, advanced or support courses, especially in math and English.

Because policies vary, this guide never quotes a "good score" or a cutoff. The only numbers that matter are the ones your schools use, and they will tell you if you ask.

How to read the score report

Results often arrive a few weeks after the test, sent to you, to the school, or both. The report can look intimidating, but most of it comes down to a few ideas.

Scaled score

The number of correct answers (the "raw score") is converted to a scaled score so that results can be compared fairly across different test forms. On the HSPT, scaled scores fall on a 200–800 scale, with about 500 representing average performance. A scaled score is not a percentage.

Percentile

A percentile compares your child with other students who took the test. A national percentile of 70 means your child scored higher than about 70% of the students in the comparison group. It does not mean 70% of the answers were correct. The 50th percentile is the middle.

National vs. local percentile

National percentile: compares your child with a national sample of students in the same grade.

Local percentile: compares your child with students in a local group, such as everyone who tested at the same school or in the same area. The two can differ. A strong local group can make the local percentile lower than the national one, and the reverse is also possible. Ask your school which one it uses.

Other things you may see

- **Subtest scores:** a score for each of the five subtests plus a combined (composite or total) score.
- **Stanines:** the same percentile information on a simple 1–9 scale, where 5 is average.
- **Grade equivalents:** describe how a score compares with typical students at different grade levels. They do not mean your child is ready for a higher grade's coursework.

If anything on the report is unclear, the admissions office can explain how it reads the scores. That is part of their job, and they are glad to help.

Questions to ask each school

Testing rules differ from school to school and from diocese to diocese. Write each school's name at the top of a column and tick each question once you have the answer. A short phone call or email to admissions usually covers all of it.

QUESTION	SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3
<i>Write each school name in its column</i>			
Test date and registration. When is the test, what is the registration deadline, and is there a fee? Are walk-ins allowed?	☐	☐	☐
Arrival and timing. What time should my child arrive, and when will the test end?	☐	☐	☐
What to bring. How many pencils (and what type)? Is an ID, confirmation or admission ticket needed? Are snacks, water or a watch allowed?	☐	☐	☐
Optional tests. Do you give an optional test (such as science, religion or mechanical aptitude)? Is it required, and how is it used?	☐	☐	☐
How scores are used. Do you use scores for admission, scholarships, course placement, or all three? Do you look at national or local percentiles?	☐	☐	☐
Scholarships. Are merit scholarships based on the HSPT? Is there a separate application or deadline?	☐	☐	☐
Scores from another site. If my child tests at a different school, will you accept those scores? How are they sent to you?	☐	☐	☐
Retest policy. Can a student take the HSPT more than once this year? If so, which score do you use?	☐	☐	☐
Accommodations. If my child has a learning plan, how and by when do we request testing accommodations?	☐	☐	☐
Results. When and how will we receive the score report?	☐	☐	☐

Why the retest question matters

Many schools and dioceses allow the HSPT only once per admissions year, and a second attempt may not count at all. Others accept more than one score. Knowing the rule ahead of time helps you plan, and it is worth confirming before the test, not after.

How to help without adding pressure

In the last week, your calm matters more than any extra practice set. A few things that help:

- **Praise the effort, not the score.** "You've put real work into this" lands better than "You need to do well."
- **Keep the routine normal.** Regular meals, regular bedtime, time with friends. The week before a test is not the time to overhaul anything.
- **Let your child lead the review.** Ask "What do you want to work on today?" instead of assigning extra work.
- **Keep it in proportion.** The HSPT is one part of an application, read alongside grades and recommendations.
- **Talk about nerves as normal.** A little nervousness means they care. A slow breath in and a slower breath out helps reset focus.
- **Avoid comparing.** Skip talk about siblings' or classmates' scores.
- **Handle the logistics yourself.** Directions, timing and what to pack are your job, so your child can focus on resting.
- **Plan something nice for after.** A favorite meal or outing gives everyone something to look forward to, whatever happens.

The final week at a glance

You'll get a short email each morning with the day's task. Most tasks take under an hour (day 7 is a full-length test), and the last two days are deliberately light.

7 days out	Full practice test. One timed online practice test, start to finish, in a quiet room.
6 days out	Review mistakes. Go through every miss and update the Weakness Map (book, Chapter 2).
5 days out	Target the weakest subtest. One or two online skill drills plus the matching chapter's key lessons.
4 days out	Learn the traps. One section of The HSPT Challenge 100 and its trap index.
3 days out	Practice pacing. Timed drills using the halfway checkpoints on the pacing card.
2 days out	Light review. Flashcards only, no new full tests. Run through the test-day checklist together.
1 day out	Rest. Pack the bag, lay out clothes, eat a good dinner, early night. No cramming.
Test day	Breakfast, arrive early, answer every question. The preparation is done.

Your HSPT plan

Fill this in together and stick it on the fridge.

TEST DATE

ARRIVAL TIME

TESTING LOCATION

SCHOOL(S) RECEIVING SCORES

OPTIONAL TEST (IF ANY)

SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE(S)

TARGET SUBTESTS (FROM THE WEAKNESS MAP)

☐ Verbal Skills

☐ Quantitative Skills

☐ Reading

☐ Mathematics

☐ Language

Where everything is

IN THE BOOK	USE IT FOR
Ch. 2 Diagnostic + Weakness Map	Sorting each subtest into <i>study first</i> (under 70%), <i>review</i> (70–89%) or <i>ready</i> (90%+)
Ch. 3 Study Plan and Test-Day Pacing	The skip-guess-return method, halfway checkpoints, handling nerves, the final week
Ch. 4–9 Subject chapters	Vocabulary, Verbal Skills, Quantitative Skills, Reading, Mathematics, Language
ONLINE AT SUMMITSTUDYGUIDES.COM/HSPT	USE IT FOR
7 timed online tests (Practice Tests 9–15)	Full-length practice under real timing
7 printable tests (Practice Tests 2–8)	Pencil-and-paper practice with answer sheets, keys and explanations
29 skill drills	25-question drills across all five subtests, timed or untimed
1,000 flashcards	Vocabulary, word parts, language rules and math

Your access code is printed in the book. Questions? Email info@summitstudyguides.com, and we'll be glad to help.

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