

2015 Team Scramble Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the format of the contest?

A: The contest consists of one hundred free-response questions covering topics from arithmetic to calculus, including puzzle-style problems, to be taken in thirty minutes by your entire team (which can include as many students as are interested). In addition to mathematical skills, the Team Scramble emphasizes collaborative, managerial, and organizational skills.

Q: How many people may take the test?

A: An unlimited number of students from your school may work together as a team.

Q: How long will the test take?

A: The test itself takes only 30 minutes of your team's time. As the coach, you will need to familiarize yourself with the materials, make extra copies, and get your team situated prior to testing, then score the test and mail the scored answer sheet back to us after testing. It is unlikely that all of this would require more than one hour of your time.

Q: When can I administer the test?

A: For your team to officially participate and be eligible for awards, you must administer the test on **Thursday, November 5th, 2015**. You may administer the test at any time you wish on that date, giving you the flexibility to test at whatever time is most convenient for the majority of your team.

Q: Why do I have to administer the test on a particular day?

A: Having taken a test, many students discuss interesting problems with their peers via the Internet. If some schools test before others, students who have not yet taken the test may be exposed to the test material, altering their scores and skewing the results of the contest. To avoid this, we ask that you administer the test on the date specified. In the event of unplanned school closures, some schools may test during the week following the official test date, so please emphasize to your students that they should not discuss the test with other schools until one week after the official test date.

Q: What tools and materials can my team use on the test?

A: Your team will need writing implements, copies of the test, and an answer sheet (extra answer sheets for recording preliminary answers may be useful), and may use blank scratch paper. Students for whom English is not their best language may use a non-electronic foreign-language/English dictionary. No other tools or materials may be used, which specifically excludes all types of calculators, computers, and cell phones.

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Q: What strategies might my team find useful on the contest?

A: Team management is the most essential strategy for this contest. Because there will be many people working quickly to answer all the questions, it is recommended that there be one or more “managers” organizing the work and ensuring that all problems are worked and checked. Managers should be familiar with the skills of team members, and should control your team’s official answer sheet. Note that the managers should be students – coaches should not interact with the team during the contest. To help the managers, problems on the test are generally grouped by difficulty, with easier problems in the first half and harder problems in the second half. Within each group, problems are generally grouped by topic, from arithmetic to calculus. Another strategy that can be employed before the contest is recruitment – the more students that participate, even if they do not normally participate in math team events, the higher your team’s score will likely be.

Q: What are “exact, complete, and simplified” answers?

A: “Exact” means that there are no approximations, which typically means that answers are left as fractions in terms of π , e , i , and radicals. “Complete” means that all correct answers are part of a student’s answer; i.e. supplying one root of a quadratic would not be sufficient. “Simplified” includes things such as completely reducing all fractional quantities and expressing irrational quantities in simplest radical form, but there are sometimes answers with several comparably simple expressions. We do not consider answers such as $\frac{3}{\sqrt{2}}$ to be simplified, because it is inconvenient to have irrational numbers in the denominators of fractions when discussing or thinking about numerical quantities. We do not consider answers such as $2(1+\sqrt{2})$ to be simplified, because an operation remains that can be performed exactly.

Q: Why do I receive the answer key and solution guide before the contest?

A: As a double-check on our scoring process, and so that you will be aware of your team’s score and any of our answers that you might wish to challenge, we ask that you score your team’s answer sheet before submitting it. To do this, you need the answer key as soon as the test is over. The solution guide is provided at the same time so that team members can learn how to do problems that they missed while the test is still fresh in their minds. Of course, it is expected that the answers and solutions will not be made available to your team until after you have collected their answer sheet.

Q: What is considered a good score?

A: Previous years’ top 25 scores can be found on the Team Scramble part of our webpage, <http://natassessment.com>, although this year’s scores could differ from these. The number of students you recruit (even those not normally participating in math team) and the management of your team’s efforts can significantly affect your team’s score.

Q: I have more questions; where can I get more information?

A: Tom Clymer, our head of academic competitions, would be happy to answer your questions. He can be reached at clymer@natassessment.com, or at (206) 650-6411. More information can also be found on our website at <http://www.natassessment.com>.