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FREE

ACT[®]

Preparing for the ACT[®] Test

What's Inside

- Full-Length Practice ACT Test, including the Optional Writing Test
- Information about the Multiple-Choice and Writing Sections
- Test-Taking Strategies
- What to Expect on Test Day

Esta publicación también se puede ver o descargar en español en www.actstudent.org

The **ACT**[®]

www.actstudent.org



Overview of the ACT

The full ACT consists of four multiple-choice sections—in English, mathematics, reading, and science—with an optional writing section. Some colleges and universities require or accept ACT writing scores, so you may consider taking the writing section.

| Test | Questions | Minutes per Test |
|--------------------|-----------|------------------|
| English | 75 | 45 |
| Mathematics | 60 | 60 |
| Reading | 40 | 35 |
| Science | 40 | 35 |
| Writing (optional) | 1 essay | 40 |

Test Formats for ACT National Testing

The full ACT is now offered nationally in both paper and online formats. Students who have taken the full ACT at least once in 2016 or later will be able to retake individual sections during any of the National test dates through ACT Section Retesting. A section retest is an online only test option that offers a way to help you focus on individual ACT sections. Students can take up to 3 sections during one testing date and can choose in which order the sections are taken. See www.actstudent.org for more information about ACT Section Retesting.

ACT tries out questions on National test dates to develop future tests. Your test may include questions that will not count towards your score. These questions may be blended in with the questions that do not count towards your score or will be presented in a 5th test that will not be reflected on your reported scores. Please try your best on these questions. Your participation can help shape ACT's future.

With blended questions, your time will be extended to allow for the additional questions.

| Test | Questions | Minutes per Test |
|--------------------|-----------|------------------|
| English | 90 | 55 |
| Mathematics | 65 | 65 |
| Reading | 50 | 45 |
| Science | 47 | 45 |
| Writing (optional) | 1 essay | 40 |

Test Strategies for the ACT

Each multiple-choice section contains questions with either four or five answers from which you are to choose the correct, or best, answer.

The ACT measures the knowledge, understanding, and skills you have acquired throughout your years in school. Because of this, it is unlikely that a “cram” course can improve your scores. However, it is a good idea to do some test preparation to be familiar with the tests and what to expect on test day.

Here are three strategies to help you prepare for the ACT:

✓ *Get familiar with the content of the sections.*

Review the information in this booklet. Note which content areas make up a large proportion of the sections. The topics included in each content area are examples of possible topics; they do not include all possibilities.

✓ *Update your knowledge and skills in the content areas.*

Review content areas that you have studied but are not fresh in your mind. Refresh your knowledge in the content areas that make up large portions of the test.

✓ *Study content areas you are not familiar with.*

If some content areas of the ACT are unfamiliar to you, consider taking coursework in those areas before you take the test.

Test-Taking Strategies

These suggestions apply to the four multiple-choice sections.

✓ *Pace yourself.*

It is important that you have enough time to read the passages/questions and figure out your responses. For each section, subtract the number of minutes you estimate you will spend skimming the passages or reading the information provided, then divide the total number of remaining minutes allowed by the number of questions to determine the estimated time you should spend on each question. If possible, spend less time on each question and use the remaining time allowed for a section to review your work and return to the questions in that section that were most difficult for you.

The time limits set for each section give nearly everyone enough time to finish all questions. However, you will want to pace yourself to avoid spending too much time on one passage or puzzling over an answer to a specific problem. Go on to other questions and come back if there is time.

✓ *Read the directions carefully.*

Before you begin each section, read the directions carefully.

- The English, reading, and science sections ask for the best answer. Read and consider all of the answer choices and choose the answer that best responds to the question.
- The mathematics section asks for the correct answer. You may want to work out the answer you feel is correct and look for it among the choices given. If your answer is not among the choices provided, reread the question and consider all the answer choices.

✓ *Read each question carefully.*

You need to understand exactly what each question asks. Some questions will require you to go through several steps to find the correct or best answer, while others can be answered more quickly.

✓ *Answer the easy questions first.*

A good strategy is to answer the easy questions and skip the questions you find difficult. After answering the easy questions, go back and answer the more difficult questions if you have time.

✓ *Use logic on more difficult questions.*

When you return to the more difficult questions, try to use logic to eliminate incorrect answers. Compare the answer choices to each other and note how they differ. Such differences may provide clues as to what the question requires. Eliminate as many incorrect answers as you can, then make an educated guess from the remaining answers.

✓ *Answer every question.*

Your scores in the sections will be based only on the number of questions that you answer correctly; there is no penalty for guessing. Try to answer every question within the time allowed for each section.

✓ *Review your work.*

If there is time left after you have answered every question in a section, go back and check your work. You will not be allowed to go back to any other section or mark responses to a section after time has been called in that section.

✓ *Be precise in choosing your responses.*

If you are taking the ACT on paper, be sure that you properly fill in the appropriate ovals on your answer document. Check that the number of the line of ovals on your answer document is the same as the number of the question you are answering and that you mark only one answer for each question. If you are taking the ACT online, be sure you select the intended response.

✓ *Erase completely.*

If you want to change a multiple-choice answer on paper, be sure to use a soft eraser that will erase the unintended mark completely and not leave smudges. Do not cross out answers or use correction fluid or tape; you must erase. Smudges or unintended marks may cause errors in scoring.

Get Ready

Prepare well in advance for the ACT.

- Know what to expect on test day. Review the information in this booklet and at www.actstudent.org.
- Take the practice tests in the order they are shown in this booklet, time yourself, and review your responses using the answer keys.
- If you are taking individual sections through ACT Section Retesting, you can use the practice tests in this booklet for more preparation.
- You can practice using the online testing format used for section retesting, or for taking the full ACT online by visiting practice.actdigitalservices.org.
- Carefully review the test-day checklist at www.act.org/the-act/checklist.
- Get plenty of rest the night before the tests.

Note: Most procedures in this booklet refer to testing on a National test date at an ACT test site (within the United States, US territories, or Puerto Rico). Procedures may differ slightly if you take a different administration of the ACT test.

On Test Day

Report on Time

- For National test dates, you must report to your assigned test site by the time stated on your admission ticket (usually 8:00 a.m.). If you are late, you will not be admitted to test. If your ticket does not list a specific test room, the test staff or posted signs will direct you.

Bring With You

- At check-in, you will be required to show an acceptable photo ID or you will not be admitted to test. See ACT requirements for ID on your ticket or at www.act.org/the-act/id.
- Your admission ticket is also required if you test on a National ACT test date. You will not be admitted to the test without it. It contains identifying information for both testing on paper and online formats. If you have lost your ticket, you can print another through your ACT web account.
- If testing in the United States, bring sharpened No. 2 pencils and good erasers (no mechanical pencils or ink pens). If you are testing internationally, you will be provided writing implements. Do not bring any other writing instruments. You will not be allowed to use them.
- A watch to pace yourself. Do not bring a watch with recording, internet, communication, or calculator capabilities (e.g., a smart watch or fitness band). You will be asked to remove your watch and place it face up on your desk during testing.
- A permitted calculator may be used on the mathematics section only. It is your responsibility to know whether your calculator is permitted. For the most current information on the ACT calculator policy, visit www.act.org/calculator-policy.html or call 800.498.6481 for a recorded message.

In the Test Room

- Test staff will direct you to a seat. If you need a left-handed desk, tell the staff as you enter.
- Do not leave the test room after you have been admitted.
- Only pencils, erasers, a permitted calculator, your watch (if brought to the test center), and your paper ticket will be allowed on your desk.
- You will be required to put all other personal belongings away.
- You may not use tobacco in any form. You may consume snacks and drinks outside the test room during break.
- Reporting time for the test will be 8:00 a.m. Testing will begin as soon as all examinees who are present at 8:00 a.m. are checked in and seated.
- Listen carefully to all directions read by the test staff.
- It is important that you follow all directions carefully.

- For the full ACT, you will normally be dismissed at about 12:35 p.m. if you take the ACT (no writing), or at about 1:35 p.m. if you take the ACT with writing.
- If you take the ACT Section Retests, dismissal time for section retesting will depend on which and how many sections you choose to take.

For Students Approved to Test at National Test Sites With One and One-Half Time

Testing with one and one-half time is available on the multiple-choice and/or writing sections for students with diagnosed disabilities and/or limited English proficiency. This is available for the full ACT and Section Retesting.

If you are approved for one and one-half time at a National test site, you will have 50% additional time to complete each section.

The full ACT:

| Test | Questions | Minutes per Test |
|--------------------|-----------|------------------|
| English | 75 | 70 |
| Mathematics | 60 | 90 |
| Reading | 40 | 55 |
| Science | 40 | 55 |
| Writing (optional) | 1 essay | 60 |

Section Retesting:

| Test | Questions | Minutes per Test |
|--------------------|-----------|------------------|
| English | 90 | 85 |
| Mathematics | 65 | 100 |
| Reading | 50 | 70 |
| Science | 47 | 70 |
| Writing (optional) | 1 essay | 60 |

After Testing

Voiding Your Test on Test Day

If you have to leave the test site before completing all of your tests, you must decide whether or not you want your test scored and then inform the test staff of your decision. If you do not, your test will be scored.

Once you access test content, you cannot request a Test Date Change. If you do not complete all your sections and want to test again, you will have to pay the full fee for your test option again. Once you begin filling out your test, you cannot change from one test option to another.

Testing More Than Once

If you wish to take the test again increase your scores, you may choose to take the full ACT, or, if you wish to concentrate on specific sections, you may consider ACT Section Retesting.

ACT will calculate and report a superscore for students who have taken the ACT test more than once, or who have completed a section retest, giving colleges the option to use the student's best scores from all test administrations, rather than scores from just one sitting, in their admission and scholarship decisions.

For information about superscoring, see www.act.org/the-act/superscore.

For more information about retaking the ACT, see www.act.org/the-act/retaking.

Testing More Than Once In the Same Administration

You may not receive scores from more than one test taken during a scheduled National or International test date. For example, you may test on Saturday, on an authorized non-Saturday date, or on a rescheduled test date—but not on more than one of those days on a particular test date. If you are admitted and allowed to test a second time on a particular test date, we will report only the scores from the first test. The second set of scores will be canceled without refund.

Requesting a Copy of Your Test Questions and Answers

On certain test dates, you may order (for an additional fee) a copy of the multiple-choice test questions used to determine your scores, a list of your answers, and the answer key. If you took the writing section, you will also receive a copy of the writing prompt, scoring guidelines, and the scores assigned to your essay.

This service is not available for all test dates and is available only for National testing or Special testing in the United States, US Territories, and Puerto Rico. Restrictions apply.

If you are interested in this service, check www.act.org/the-act/tir for more detail.

Prohibited Behavior at the Test Center

A complete list of the prohibited behaviors is provided in the Terms and Conditions located at www.act.org/the-act/terms. Please be reminded of the following:

- You may not access an electronic device such as cell phones, smart watches, and fitness bands, at any time during testing or during break. All devices must be powered off and placed out of sight from the time you are admitted to test until you leave the test center.
- You may not fill in or alter responses to any multiple-choice questions or continue to write or alter the essay after time has been called. This includes fixing stray marks or accidental keystrokes. You may not look at any section of the test outside of the designated time for that test.
- You may not give or receive assistance by any means. This includes looking at another person's test.
- You are not allowed to use highlighter pens, colored pens or pencils, notes, dictionaries, unapproved scratch paper, or other aids.
- You may not wear a watch during the administration. Watches brought into the test room must be placed face up on your work surface.
- You may not allow an alarm on a personal item to sound in the test room or create any other disturbance. If you are wearing a watch with an alarm or have any other alarm device, you must be sure it is turned off.
- The test is confidential and remains so even after the exam is complete. You may not remove any materials from the test room. You may not discuss or share test questions, answers, or test form identification numbers during test administration, during breaks, or after the test.
- You may not disclose test questions or answers in any way or at any time, including through social media, in whole or in part.
- Eating, drinking, and the use of tobacco or reading materials are not permitted in the test room.
- Your test center may also have additional procedures with which you must comply.

If you are observed or suspected of engaging in prohibited behavior, you will be dismissed and your test will not be scored.

✓ *Reread the sentence, using your selected answer.*

Once you have selected the answer you feel is best, reread the corresponding sentence(s) of the passage, inserting your selected answer at the appropriate place in the text to make sure it is the best answer within the context of the passage.

Mathematics Section

The mathematics section is designed to assess the mathematical skills students have typically acquired in courses taken up to the beginning of grade 12.

Most questions are self-contained. Some questions may belong to a set of several questions (e.g., each about the same graph or chart).

The material covered emphasizes the major content areas that are prerequisites to successful performance in entry-level courses in college mathematics. Knowledge of basic formulas and computational skills are assumed as background for the problems, but recall of complex formulas and extensive computation are not required.

Note: You may use a calculator on the mathematics section. See www.act.org/calculator-policy.html for details about prohibited models and features.

Nine scores are reported for the mathematics section: a score for the section overall and eight reporting category scores based on specific mathematical knowledge and skills. The approximate percentage of the section devoted to each reporting category is:

Preparing for Higher Mathematics (57–60%)

This category covers the more recent mathematics that students are learning, starting when they began using algebra as a general way of expressing and solving equations. This category is divided into five subcategories:

- **Number and Quantity (7–10%):** Demonstrate knowledge of real and complex number systems. Reason with numerical quantities in many forms, including expressions with integer and rational exponents, and vectors and matrices.
- **Algebra (12–15%):** Solve, graph, and model multiple types of expressions. Interpret and use many different kinds of equations, such as linear, polynomial, radical, and exponential relationships. Find solutions to systems of equations, even when represented by a simple matrix equation, and apply results to real-world contexts.
- **Functions (12–15%):** Demonstrate knowledge of function: definition, notation, representation, and application. Use functions including linear, radical, piecewise, polynomial, and logarithmic. Manipulate and translate functions, as well as interpret and use important features of graphs.
- **Geometry (12–15%):** Apply your knowledge of shapes and solids, using concepts such as congruence and similarity relationships or surface area and volume measurements. Apply your understanding to composite objects, and solve for missing values in triangles, circles, and other figures. Use trigonometric ratios and equations of conic sections.

- **Statistics and Probability (8–12%):** Describe center and spread of distributions. Apply and analyze data collection methods. Understand and model relationships in bivariate data. Calculate probabilities by recognizing the related sample spaces.

Integrating Essential Skills (40–43%)

This category focuses on measuring how well you can synthesize and apply your understandings and skills to solve more complex problems. The questions ask you to address concepts such as rates and percentages; proportional relationships; area, surface area, and volume; average and median; and expressing numbers in different ways. Solve non-routine problems that involve combining skills in chains of steps; applying skills in varied contexts; understanding connections; and demonstrating fluency.

Modeling

This category represents all questions that involve producing, interpreting, understanding, evaluating, and improving models. Each question is also counted in other appropriate reporting categories above. This category is an overall measure of how well you use modeling skills across mathematical topics.

Tips for Taking the Mathematics Section

✓ *If you use a calculator, use it wisely.*

All of the mathematics problems can be solved without a calculator. Many of the problems are best done without a calculator. Use good judgment in deciding when, and when not, to use a calculator. For example, for some problems you may wish to do scratch work to clarify your thoughts on the question before you begin using a calculator to do computations.

✓ *Solve the problem.*

To work out solutions to the problems, you will usually do scratch work in the space provided. You may wish to glance over the answer choices after reading the questions. However, working backwards from all five answer choices can take a lot of time and may not be effective.

✓ *Find your solution among the answer choices.*

Once you have solved the problem, look for your answer among the choices. If your answer is not included among the choices, carefully reread the problem to see whether you missed important information. Pay careful attention to the question being asked. If an equation is to be selected, check to see whether the equation you think is best can be transformed into one of the answer choices provided.

✓ *Make sure you answer the question.*

The solutions to many questions will involve several steps. Make sure your answer accounts for all the necessary steps. Frequently, an answer choice is an intermediate result, not the final answer.

✓ *Make sure your answer is reasonable.*

Sometimes an error in computation will result in an answer that is not practically possible for the situation described. Always think about your answer to determine whether it is reasonable.

✓ *Check your answer.*

You may arrive at an incorrect solution by making common errors in the problem-solving process. If there is time remaining before the end of the mathematics section, it is important that you reread the questions and check your answers to make sure they are correct.

Reading Section

The reading section that measures your ability to read closely, reason logically about texts using evidence, and integrate information from multiple sources.

The section questions focus on the mutually supportive skills that readers must bring to bear in studying written materials across a range of subject areas. Specifically, questions will ask you to determine main ideas; locate and interpret significant details; understand sequences of events; make comparisons; comprehend cause-effect relationships; determine the meaning of context-dependent words, phrases, and statements; draw generalizations; analyze the author's or narrator's voice and method; analyze claims and evidence in arguments; and integrate information from multiple texts.

The reading section is composed of multiple parts. Some parts consist of one long prose passage and others consist of shorter prose passages. The passages represent the levels and kinds of text commonly encountered in first-year college curricula.

Each passage is preceded by a heading that identifies the author and source, and may include important background information to help you understand the passage. Each portion contains a set of multiple-choice questions. These questions do not test the rote recall of facts from outside the passage or rules of formal logic, nor do they contain isolated vocabulary questions. In sections that contain two shorter passages, some of the questions involve both of those passages.

Five scores are reported for the reading section: a score for the section overall and three reporting category scores based on specific knowledge and skills; and an Understanding Complex Texts indicator. The approximate percentage of the section devoted to each reporting category is:

Key Ideas and Details (55–60%)

This category requires you to read texts closely to determine central ideas and themes. Summarize information and ideas accurately. Understand relationships and draw logical inferences and conclusions, including understanding sequential, comparative, and cause-effect relationships.

Craft and Structure (25–30%)

These questions ask you to determine word and phrase meanings; analyze an author's word choice rhetorically; analyze text structure; understand the author's purpose and perspective; and analyze characters' points of view. Interpret

authorial decisions rhetorically and differentiate between various perspectives and sources of information.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (13–18%)

This category requires you to understand authors' claims, differentiate between facts and opinions, and use evidence to make connections between different texts that are related by topic. Some questions will require you to analyze how authors construct arguments, and to evaluate reasoning and evidence from various sources.

Tips for Taking the Reading Section

✓ *Read each passage carefully.*

Before you begin answering a question, read all of the content carefully. Be conscious of relationships between or among ideas. You may take note about important ideas in the passages.

✓ *Refer to the passages when answering the questions.*

Answers to some of the questions will be found by referring to what is explicitly stated in the text of the passages. Other questions will require you to determine implicit meanings and to draw conclusions, comparisons, and generalizations. Consider the text before you answer any question.

Science Section

The science section measures the interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem-solving skills required in the natural sciences. The section presents several authentic scientific scenarios, each followed by a number of multiple-choice questions.

The content includes biology, chemistry, Earth/space sciences (e.g., geology, astronomy, and meteorology), and physics. Advanced knowledge in these areas is not required, but background knowledge acquired in general, introductory science courses may be needed to correctly answer some of the questions.

The science section focuses on multidimensional assessment, with questions that assess science content in concert with science skills and practices.

The questions require you to recognize and understand the basic features of, and concepts related to, the provided information; to examine critically the relationship between the information provided and the conclusions drawn or hypotheses developed; and to generalize from given information to gain new information, draw conclusions, or make predictions.

Note: You are not permitted to use a calculator in the science section.