

STRATEGIES WHEN TAKING PRACTICE AND REAL “ACT WITH WRITING” TESTS

GENERAL TIPS:

1. ACT success formula: Practice. Understand your mistakes. Practice some more!!
2. Classroom tests emphasize subject knowledge. The ACT emphasizes time management and test-taking strategies.
3. The ACT assumes a 10th grade level of subject knowledge, so skills, not content, is emphasized in this workshop.
4. The goal of this **workshop** and **follow-up self-help exercise** is to help you build pacing skills (strict timing and concentration are essential), strategic test-taking, test familiarity and confidence. This will help you raise your practice ACT score to the score and range colleges expect on the “real” test.
5. Minimum ACT scores expected: 18+ for admission. 24+ for merit scholarships. 26+ for honors programs.
6. Colleges only look at your best ACT or SAT score, so you can take them multiple times without penalty.
7. ACT has evenly spaced the easier and harder questions throughout all four tests. Do not skip any questions!
8. Do not violate the ACT’s two cardinal rules: Don’t cheat and don’t distract others by sound or gesture at any time during the test. Turn off and remove ALL electronic devices and earplugs before the test
9. Bring a **wristwatch**, a calculator, and two #2 pencils to all practice and “real” ACT tests.
10. Be well-rested and well-fed to maintain your concentration and timing. The test is mentally exhausting.
11. Proper pacing is vital. Pacing skill is best developed by strictly timing each passage and question with a **watch**.
12. Pacing strategy. Each question has a right answer and a close (“distractor”) answer. Concentrate on those English, Reading and Science questions you can quickly (within :15) reduce to the two best answers. Then pick the best one within :15. Math allows :60 per question. For more difficult questions, guess, don’t dwell!!
13. Look at all 4 answer options (5 for math) before answering any question.
14. Especially for perfectionists – do not dwell on any question. Quickly guess and move on!
15. To get the most out of this workshop, you must first mark your answers in your test booklet before marking them on your test sheets. Besides helping you build your pacing skill, strategic test-taking, test familiarity and confidence, it also helps you review your answers more quickly during the test.
16. After completing a test, close your booklet, turn your test sheet over, and DO NOT distract others.
17. For additional practice tests and tips, ACT recommends “The Real ACT Prep Guide by ACT”, by Peterson’s. Free ACT practice tests may also be available at your school or online at www.actstudent.org/sampletest/

ENGLISH: 75 Questions. 45 Mins.. 5 Passages. **9 Minutes Per Passage.** (Each Passage- 1:30 skim read, :30/question)

1. Content: Tests your ability to use correct written and spoken English. Mechanics (written) -- punctuation, grammar, sentence structure. Rhetoric (spoken) -- word/sentence usage, i.e., word accuracy for given situations.
2. Skim each passage for overall understanding. While skimming, underline the topic sentence in each paragraph.
3. Most questions are underlined. Before answering any underlined questions, read the entire sentence.
4. There are few correct “No Change” or absolute (always, never, etc.) answers.
5. Defer all summary questions (question numbers that are in boxes). There are fewer than 10 summary questions.
6. Timing: Mark your booklet. Starting time: __:__. Passage 1 __:__; 2 __:__; 3 __:__; 4 __:__; 5 __:__.

MATH: 60 Questions. 60 Minutes. **1 Minute Per Question.**

1. Content: arithmetic (14 questions), basic algebra (10), geometry (23), algebra 2 (9), trigonometry (4).
2. Reason through the first step(s) before using a calculator. It saves a lot of time! Permitted calculators (page 5).
3. Scratch paper – use the booklet, not the scoring sheet.
4. Timing: Mark your booklet. Starting time: __:__. Question 20 __:__; 40 __:__; 60 __:__.

READING: 40 Questions. 35 Minutes. 4 Passages. **9 Minutes Per Passage.** (Each Passage- 3:00 read, :35/question)

1. Content. Tests your reading comprehension and reasoning skills, not your subject knowledge.
2. Be an ACTIVE reader. While reading each paragraph, underline the topic sentence (“main idea”) and key support sentences. Tie the topic sentences of the passage. Answer the passage questions. Repeat for each passage.
3. Timing: Mark your booklet. Starting time: __:__. Passage 1 __:__; 2 __:__; 3 __:__; 4 __:__.

SCIENCE REASONING: 40 Ques. 35 Mins. 7 Passages. **5 Mins. Per Passage.** (Each Passage- 2:00 study, :30/question)

1. Content. Reasoning skills are more vital than subject knowledge. You MUST be able to interpret graphs, tables and experiments. Understand them before reading the passage or attempting any questions.
2. The first question of each passage is critical as it usually tests your understanding of the passage. Get it right!
3. Timing: Mark your booklet. Starting time: __:__. Passage 1 __:__; 2 __:__; 3 __:__; 4 __:__; 5 __:__; 6 __:__; 7 __:__.

WRITING SAMPLE: 30 Minutes. Scoring: Writing = 0 to12, plus a combined Writing/English score of 1 to 36.

1. Read the directions and prompt carefully, then decide which side of the issue you will take.
2. Take a few minutes to make a rough outline stating your position and supporting arguments.
3. Use the 5 paragraph method, put one space between paragraphs, use linking words like: “first”, “in conclusion”.
4. Write or print clearly. Illegible papers are given zeroes. Generally, 1½ to two pages are expected. 8/09