

General Test Taking Strategies

1. Pacing.
2. Carefully read the directions (English, Reading, and Science sections ask for the best answer, Math is correct answer).
3. Read each question carefully.
4. Answer the easy questions first.
5. Use logic on more difficult questions.
6. Review answers/work.
7. Get familiar with the content of each section.
 1. Update knowledge/skills in each content area
 2. Study content areas that are unfamiliar

ACT English Test Preparation

1. The English Test consists of passages that challenge editing ability.
2. Some questions check knowledge of **grammar** while others test **composition skills**.

There is less grammar, more reading-based

3. It is one of the most **demanding** tests in terms of **time**.

ACT English Test – Time Management is Key!

- With only **35 mins to answer 50 questions**, questions must be answered approx. **every 30 seconds**.
- Plan on 7-8 minutes per passage (6-7 shorter passages).
- If this pace is maintained, students should have approx. 5 min left at the end.
 - Pacing needs to be practiced!
- Part of time management is to utilize skipping – **mark and move**.
- Odds of getting more questions correct increase if the entire test is completed.

ACT English Test–Taking Tips!

- ***Be aware of the writing style used in each passage*** – be sure to understand the context of the question.
- ***Examine the underlined portions of the passage*** – consider the elements of writing included in each underlined portion.
- ***Note the questions with no underlined portions*** – some questions will refer to the whole passage, so make sure to pay attention to the overall message and writing style.
- ***Reread the sentence, using the answer you selected*** – does the answer selected make the most sense within the context of the passage?

ACT English Test – “The Art of Guessing”

1. There is **no penalty** for guessing.
2. **Never** leave an answer **blank**.
 - If a student reads the question and decides to skip it, fill in the best guess before moving to the next question.
3. **Mark and Move**
4. Eliminate the answers that are **most unlikely** and go with your gut.
 - The guesses will be much better right after reading the question than if they wait until the end of the test and blindly guess.

ACT English Test – “Semicolons: When Not to Use Them”

- Use when an ordinary comma won't do or when you need a comma that will stand out.
- The ACT almost **never** uses semicolons as super commas.
- If you can't replace the semicolon with a period, its being used incorrectly:
 - I walked out of the store; it cost too much.
 - I walked out of the store; costing too much

Which one is correct?

ACT English Test – Why Your Words’ Feelings Matter

“I walk at a decrepit pace; the soft sand squeaks peacefully beneath my feet.”

Which choice would most logically and effectively emphasize the positive, peaceful attitude the narrator feels toward his walk on the beach?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. Crippled
- C. Somber
- D. Tranquil

**Make word choices that create the effect that the author intends.*

ACT English Test – Why Are All of the Answers Right?

- When **more than one answer** appears correct, re-evaluate.
 - If more than one answer is grammatically correct, then it's important to look for *what is the best choice in terms of composition*.
- If a student is uncertain between two choices, go *with the one that they feel more certain about*.
- Stop looking for the “right” answer, and start looking for the “best” answer choice.
 - The best answer choice has nothing wrong with the **grammar**, is **consistent**, clearly **communicates**, is **concise**.

ACT English Test – Approx. 14% of score hinges on this little mark..,

The lively crowd, at Promontory Summit watched as the Last Spike, fashioned from 17.6 karat copper-alloyed gold, was dropped into a pre-drilled hole and gently tapped into place with a silver hammer.

F. NO CHANGE

G. crowd, at Promontory Summit

H. crowd, at Promontory Summit,

J. crowd at Promontory Summit

- Comma usage is the key to a higher ACT English score.
- On the ACT, more often than not you'll need to remove unnecessary commas.
- ***When in doubt, commas out!***

ACT Reading Test Preparation

1. It may go without saying, but the ACT Reading test checks the student's ability to read.
2. Passages appear in random order (not fixed).
3. It's a **reading comprehension test above all**, and no number of reading strategies can overcome poor reading skills.
4. Students should **double down** on their reading before taking the ACT.
5. Bookworms have a definite advantage on the section of the ACT.
6. If students aren't reading at a college level, they may find some segments difficult
 - Understanding the ***question types*** and following ***pacing techniques*** can make a big difference!

ACT Reading Test–Taking Tips!

- ***Read each passage carefully*** – Read the content quickly, but carefully. Be conscious of relationships between or among ideas. Take note about important ideas in the passage.
- ***Refer to the passages when answering the questions*** – Answers to some questions will be found by referring to what is explicitly stated in the text of the passage. Other questions will require that students determine implicit meanings and to draw conclusions, comparisons, and generalizations. Consider the text before answering questions.

ACT Reading Test Preparation – The Four S's

1. **Skimming** – a passage requires a student to read the passage very quickly, only looking for the most important information. The easiest way to do this is to read the first sentence of each paragraph and just look at the rest of the words without carefully reading them.
2. **Scanning** - a passage is the way you search the passage to find the information needed to answer the question. The easy way to do this to move a finger over every word until what is needed is found.
3. **Support** – always comes from the passage and it is used to pick the correct answer. Scan the passage before selecting any answers.
4. **Scope** – section of the passage that contains the correct answer. Even if the choice is supported, it is out of scope if it doesn't answer the question. Stay in the same paragraph as the support found during the scan.

ACT Reading Prep – Tip: The Dictionary is Friendly

Get in the habit of:

“Anytime a student is reading something in school (or reading in general) get used to looking up the meaning of any word that you come across that you don’t understand. Check the synonyms and derivation of the word as well”

Do this for a few months prior to taking the ACT!

ACT Math Test Preparation

1. The Math Test consists of **45 questions**
2. Significantly less pre-HS math, Same number of HS-level but higher proportion, Fewer “beyond grade level” questions.
3. No grouped questions.
4. Score is mainly determined by a student's ability to solve **word problems and their skills and accuracy in pre-algebra, algebra, and geometry.**
5. A student can get a 33 **without knowing trig**
6. Students should have a goal to determine the **right pacing strategy**
 1. *Math Blitz (above 24)*
 2. *Cherry-Picking (below 24)*

ACT Math Test Preparation

1. Use the calculator wisely – utilize scratch paper.
2. Solve the problem – scratch paper is your friend!
3. Find solutions among the answer choices.
4. Make sure to answer the question.
 1. **Make sure the answer is reasonable!**
5. Check your work!

ACT Math Blitz Strategy

1. By **pacing and practice to improve speed**, a student can grab **an extra 10 minutes** or more on tougher questions towards the end.
2. ***Blitz the first 15 questions***, moving through in only 10 minutes.
3. Allow 15 minutes for the ***middle*** 15 questions.
4. Will then ***have 25 minutes*** for the last 15 questions.

ACT Math Cherry-Picking Strategy

1. By ***slowing down on the earlier questions***, and by taking more guesses on the tougher ones, a student can ***improve their accuracy*** on the questions they know how to answer.
2. If the student(s) know how to solve a question, ***take the time to show their work*** and answer it.
3. If they don't know the answer, make a best guess and then ***mark and move***.
4. Set a goal; look at ***how many questions needed for scale score goal*** and attempt 5 more than that.
5. ***Target the questions*** that can be answered in the practice tests and take your time with those.

ACT Science Test Preparation

1. Don't think of the science portion as a single 40-question test; think of it as **seven mini-test** in rapid succession.
2. You must move through each mini-test in approx. **5 minutes**.
3. If students following that pacing, they can get through the entire test **without running out of time**.
4. If the question is too time-consuming, **mark and move**.
5. At least 1 scored passage includes **Engineering** concepts.

ACT Science Test – Types of Passages

- ***Data Representation*** – focus mostly on reading graphs, tables, and other infographics. Tip: these almost never require a student to read the passage.
- ***Research Summary*** – focus mostly on analyzing a set of experiments. Tip: Occasional use of the passage; sometimes will need to reference back to the experiment.
- ***Conflicting viewpoints*** – focus on a group of theories and how they are similar/different. Tip: Even though passages may have a graph or table, the reading portion is the most important part.

ACT Science Prep - “Connect The Dots” Strategy

1. Look at the *graphs and picture first*.
2. As they read the passage, *refer back to the parts of the images that are mentioned*.
3. **Back and forth** between the passage and the infographic.
4. The passage is a *guide* to deciphering the infographics.
 1. Using a practice test (Preparing the ACT), draw at least 25 lines connecting words and phrases that appear in the passage with words that appear in the infographic. Then draw at least 10 lines connecting words and phrases that appear in the questions with words that appear in the infographics or passage.

ACT Science Prep – Crossing out Contradictions

1. There is **nearly as much to read** in the ***questions*** as in the ***passage***.
2. **Eliminate some of the text** to make life easier.
 1. A good way to eliminate answers is to spot contradictions.
 2. A **contradiction** is a statement that can't be true because of some fact already established.
3. Questions that have answers which follow a format similar to “**Yes, because...**” or “**No, because...**” typically contradict one another.
4. Instead of trying to consider all the passage and answer choices at once, break them down into their component parts and work on it from there.

ACT Science Prep – Reading Graphs

1. **First task** when starting a science passage is to **read graphs, charts, and infographics**.
 1. Think Connecting the Dots technique.
2. **Look immediately** at the **x-and y-axis labels**.
3. Look at the **image** in the main part of the graph and look for **labels** there.
 1. The chart may contain two y-axes or two x-axes. That means the quantities being graphed on the same axis are directly proportional; as one increases, so does the other.
4. Allow **15 seconds** to look these figures and tables over.
5. Check for understanding of the graph by reading one of the values it describes and observing any trends detected.

ACT Science Prep – Tips to consider when answer choices are all graphs

1. First look at the differences in choices.
 1. Perhaps two are increasing while two are decreasing.
2. Look at the line characteristics – are they all straight? Does one or more have a curve? Do any have a steep drop-off after a point?
3. Eliminate the choices that **CAN'T** describe the answer to the question because the area moving in the wrong direction, etc.
4. Usually there will only be **one choice left**: the right one!