

Timing

45 Minutes—75 Questions

5 Passages of 15 Questions each = Pace of 9 Minutes per Passage

Types of ACT English Questions

1. Conventions of Standard English

- a. Sentence Structure
- b. Punctuation
- c. Usage (Agreement in verbs, pronouns, modifiers, idioms)

2. Production of Writing

- a. Topic Development
- b. Organization
- c. Revising Text
- d. Purpose
- e. Introductions and Conclusions

3. Knowledge of Language

- a. Precision
- b. Conciseness
- c. Transitions

Sentence Structure

1. A complete sentence (independent clause) must express a complete thought and have both a subject and a verb. If any one of these elements is missing, the sentence is a fragment and will be an incorrect answer on the ACT.
2. ACT questions test comma usage in the form of run-on sentences. If an answer choice connects two independent clauses using only a comma—with no FANBOYS—that answer is a run-on and incorrect. Correct run-ons by starting a new sentence, using a semicolon, or adding FANBOYS.

Punctuation

Commas

1. **Items in a Series:** My favorite bands are First Aid Kit, Of Monsters and Men, and the Beatles.
2. **FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) The clause on either side of the FANBOY must be independent:** I would have loved to see the Beatles in concert, but I wasn't alive in the 1960s.
3. **Introductory Element, often a dependent clause:** Because of the pandemic, Of Monsters and Men canceled their world tour in 2020.
4. **Interrupting Element (nonessential element):** Johanna and Klara, members of First Aid Kit, have been singing together since they were very young.

Semicolons

1. **Separate two independent, closely related clauses:** My favorite singer is Regina Spektor; his favorite singer is Norah Jones. (*No FANBOYS with semicolons)
2. **Separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunctive adverb:** I have always believed that I have a good taste in music; however, his taste has always been poor.

Colons

1. **To announce, introduce, or direct attention to a list, a noun or noun phrase, a quotation, or an example/explanation:** We covered the best sections of the ACT: English and Reading.
2. **To join two sentences:** Life is like a puzzle: half the fun is in trying to work it out.

Dashes

1. Dashes function like commas and parentheses while also adding extra emphasis:

- a. Everyone I know – even Bob, Mary, and John – attended my party.
- b. There are only two guarantees in life – death and taxes.
- c. His continued quests – I would say failures – to win the lottery drained his cash.

Apostrophes

1. **Contractions:** I'm, can't, their's
2. **Possessions:** family's, districts' (plural)
3. **its vs. it's:** possessive vs. contraction

Usage (Pronoun Agreement)

- ✓ Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in type and number (the nouns to which the pronouns refer).
 - who = subject (I'm not the one who likes pears.)
 - whom = object (He is the one whom I love.)
- ✓ Tip! When you would use “he” or “they,” use WHO. Cross out any information preceding the who/whom to help you.
EX: ~~You can tell~~ (who/whom) it was.
You can tell WHO it was. (because you would say “It was he” or “He was it.”)

XX: ~~I will give it to~~ (whoever/whomever) asks for one.
(HIM asks for one or HE asks for one?)

Also, be mindful of the differences in demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these, those). Context is key, so consider physical (pointing), location, time, and pairs.

Usage (Verbs)

- ✓ Pay attention to the verb tense the passage is in. All verbs should be in the same tense, either past (walked), present (walk(s)), or future (will walk).
- ✓ Verbs must also agree with their subjects. If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular: *The girls walk to the park.* If the subject is plural, the verb must be plural: *The girl walks to the park.* Beware of prepositional phrases: *The girls of the small town walk/walks to the park.*

Topic Development

Development questions usually begin with something similar to “Which choice best...” To answer these questions effectively, study the context surrounding the section question refers to and select the answer that best fits into that context.

Organization

Most organization questions ask where a sentence should be placed or how paragraphs should be arranged. There are often use clues in the passage to help you determine the best organization. Pay attention to chronology, explanation of a term or phrase, introduction of a person, examples, logic/transitions.

Revising Text

In order to correctly answer Revising Text questions, you should determine if the revision will accomplish a specific purpose or eliminate questions that do not coincide with the purpose.

1. If the writer were to delete the preceding sentence, the paragraph would primarily lose:
2. The writer is considering adding the following sentence... Should the writer make this addition here?

Purpose

Purpose questions generally come at the end of the passage:

Question 15 asks about the passage as a whole.

You will be asked to determine the authors point of view or main topic. The question generally asks you to determine if the answer is Yes or No. Once you have determined Yes or No, you will then need to refine your answer to determine why you chose Yes or No. These questions are why it is important to read the whole passage as you are answering questions and not just skip to and underlined portion to answer the questions.

Introductions/Conclusions

Introductions should explain the topic and purpose of a paragraph, include information discussed later in the paragraph, and provide an appropriate transition (when applicable) from the previous paragraph or introduce the next paragraph.

Conclusions should summarize the topic and purpose of a paragraph/passage, include information discussed earlier in the paragraph/passage, and provide an appropriate transition (when applicable) from the previous paragraph or introduce the next paragraph.

Precision

Precision questions ask you to identify the correct word given the context. To do this, you should read the surrounding text to determine the author's meaning. Look for question stems to give you a hint about the correct choice: *Which of the following best conveys the opportunity presented by the Internet?*

Conciseness

For most ACT questions, the best answer is often the shortest answer:

1. A. NO CHANGE
B. the increasing and growing isolationism
C. the increasing isolationism and sense of alienation
D. a growing sense of isolationism

However, there are some exceptions, namely when a question has a question stem:

2. Which of the following details best emphasizes why the Beatles are the most influential band of the modern era?

Transitions

ACT transition questions will ask you the only to identify appropriate transition words within and between sentences but also appropriate transition sentences between paragraphs.

Common transition words you will be asked to choose correctly: although, but, despite, however, rather than, though, while, consequently, sense, therefore, furthermore, moreover, in fact, indeed, finally

Common questions about transition sentences: Which of the following provides the most effective transition from the previous paragraph to this paragraph?

Which choice most effectively concludes the sentence and leads into the information that follows in the paragraph?