

ACT Test-Taking Strategies

The best way to improve your ACT score is to take challenging courses, come to school, and work hard!

<p style="text-align: center;">General strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a timed practice test – become familiar with the pacing and the directions. • Don't take time to read the directions on the actual test. • The great thing about multiple-choice questions, is that they give you the answer. Your job is simply to recognize it. • Bubble by page (or at the end) to save time. • Skip the more difficult questions. Flag them and come back to them. • Note: This strategy cannot be used on the MAP or the Accuplacer. • Write on your test. • Cross out answers that you know are incorrect. • When time is almost out . . . Bubble in the rest of the answers, then go back and work as much as you have time for. There is no penalty for guessing. • Know you can do it! 	<p style="text-align: center;">Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relax! Remember this test measures <u>reasoning</u> not content. None of the questions require rote memorization, just use your brain and logical reasoning. • Complete the data representation passages <u>first</u> - these passages are the easiest and contain several large graphics like charts, tables, diagrams and graphs. • Read the question before looking at the chart/graph. Know what you are looking for! • Pay attention to the labels, axes, titles, & trends of all graphics. • Mark up the text (underline, cross-out, circle, etc) • Do the Conflicting Viewpoints Passage last. These are the hardest and take the most time. • Use shorthand notes in the conflicting viewpoints passage. Identify each scientist's theory, key components and conclusion. • Practice! Practice! Practice!
<p style="text-align: center;">Math</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pace yourself. • Answer the easy questions first. • Read the problem carefully. Underline what the question is specifically asking you to solve for. • Look for information in the answer choices. • If you get stuck, substitute numbers from the answer choices as your variables. Start with the middle number—if it doesn't work, you'll know whether to choose a higher or lower number. • Draw and label diagrams. • You're allowed to use a calculator, but it won't help you unless you know how to approach the problems. • Do a ton of practice, and understand every single mistake. 	<p style="text-align: center;">English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the entire sentence that the underlined portion is found in • Several rhetorical strategies questions (author's purpose, subject/organization of the passage) require a reading of the entire passage • Answer the easy questions first • Often the shortest (most concise) answer option is the best • Pay attention to author's purpose • Often students finish this test early: mark questions you are uncertain about, then use extra time to go back and review them • Top content areas for review: comma rules, subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, verb tense shifts, apostrophe rules
<p style="text-align: center;">Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing is key: don't spend so long reading the passages that you don't have enough time for the questions • Try not to spend more than 3 ½ minutes reading each passage • Something to consider: read and summarize only first sentences of paragraphs, then read the questions and come back to relevant paragraphs • Pay attention to transition words as they signal important shifts or focuses that questions will frequently ask you about • In non-fiction passages, try to quickly locate and mark the thesis and supporting evidence • If the question refers you to a set of lines (such as 31-36), it is probably a good idea to read one additional line before and after (30-37) • Do the passage you find easiest to read first 	<p style="text-align: center;">Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the prompt carefully • Don't be overwhelmed by the task the prompt lays out for you—you'll just be making an argument—your English classes have trained you well for this! • Plan before you begin the essay: make some organizational notes in your test booklet • T-chart, key points, notes for opposing viewpoint • Take a stance and have a clear thesis in your introductory paragraph • Write multiple paragraphs (probably at least four) • Intro, body support (may need more than one paragraph here), opposing viewpoint, conclusion • Use specific examples and explain them • Use transition words

