

P-CEP

ACT
Test Taking
Strategies
Booklet

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Strategies taken from: “Preparing for the ACT” and
“Test-Taking Strategies for High School Students – High School MEAP, Spring, 2006”

General Test Taking Strategies

Be Confident

❖ **Come Prepared**

Bring all the materials you will need, e.g., pencil, calculator, eraser, and watch

❖ **Stay Relaxed and Confident**

Take a deep breath.

Remind your self you can do well.

Avoid talking to other students before a test.

❖ **Be Comfortable but Alert**

Choose a good spot to sit.

Make sure you have enough room to work.

Taking Control of Tests

❖ **Follow Directions Carefully**

Make sure you understand what to do before you begin

❖ **Budget Your Time Appropriately**

Preview the test – Spend 10% of your time reading through the questions carefully.

Plan to do the easy questions first and the hard questions last.

Take notes as you read the questions that you can use later.

❖ **Check Your Work Carefully**

Make sure your answers match the questions.

Proofread.

Check for minor errors.

True/False

Making Your Best Guess

- ❖ When in doubt, guess TRUE
- ❖ Words like “no, never, always, every” imply FALSE
- ❖ Words like “sometimes, can, should” imply TRUE
- ❖ EVERY part of a True sentence MUST be TRUE
- ❖ Negatives are confusing
Cross out the negative words (No, Not, Cannot).
Read the sentence that remains and decide if it is True or False.
If it is true, then the opposite is false.

Multiple Choice Test Tips

Making Your Best Guess

- ❖ On the Michigan Merit Exam you are not penalized for guessing
- ❖ Read each question all the way through
- ❖ If you are not certain of the answer, cross out the wrong choices and reconsider the question later
- ❖ “All of the above” answers are often correct
- ❖ If you have no idea of the answer – check for options that “look alike” and consider the best_first choice among them
- ❖ Do not linger

Reading Test Strategies

Reading Informational Passages

- ❖ **Scan the Reading Passage First**
- ❖ **Read the Questions Carefully**
- ❖ **Look Back to Read for Details**
- ❖ **New Vocabulary or Facts**
New vocabulary or facts are at the beginning of a paragraph.
- ❖ **Details and Relationships**
Details and relationships between ideas are at the end of the paragraph.
- ❖ **Look at the Conclusions or end of the passage for help with questions about Predictions and Inferences**

Where to Look for Answers in Narratives (Stories)

- ❖ **Scan the story, and then read it carefully before looking at the questions.**
- ❖ **Read the questions, then scan the story**
- ❖ **Look at the beginning of the story to find when and where the story occurs.**
- ❖ **The middle of the story will have information to help you answer questions about a problem in a story.**
- ❖ **The end of the story will tell you how the problem was resolved.**
- ❖ **Make predictions using the information in the story.**

Essay Exams

Stay Organized

- ❖ Read the questions and pay attention to the directions.
- ❖ Watch for words like: Compare
 Argue
 Take a Position
- ❖ List your ideas, thoughts, points you want to include in your essay.
- ❖ Write one well-developed answer with three things:
 - 1) Introduction: state the topic
 - 2) Develop your point: Include the details, use the Key Words
 - 3) Conclusion: summarize what you just discussed

Getting Math Tests Right Calculators and Story Problems

- ❖ Find out what type of calculators are allowed
 - These types of calculators are prohibited:
 - Texas Instruments: All model numbers that begin with TI-89 or TI-92
 - Hewlett-Packard: hp 48GII and all model numbers that begin with hp 40G or hp 49G
 - Casio: Algebra fx 2.0, ClassPad 300, and all model numbers that begin with CFX-9970G
 - Calculators with built-in computer algebra systems
 - pocket organizers
 - handheld or laptop computers
 - electronic writing pads or pen-input devices—The Sharp EL 9600 is permitted.
 - calculators built into cellular phones or other electronic communication devices
 - calculators with a typewriter keypad (keys in QWERTY format)
- ❖ Bring your calculator to the testing
- ❖ Practice using the calculator
- ❖ Learn to estimate: Does the answer look right?
- ❖ Make use of formulas on reference sheets.
- ❖ If you are unsure, look at the middle range numbers in a multiple-choice test.
- ❖ Go back over the test and check your answers.

Stop the Test Jitters

Be Prepared!

If you get nervous on tests, STUDY AHEAD OF TIME!

Give yourself 2 nights of study time.

Study 2 nights before the test.

Review night before the test.

The more prepared you are for the test, the less nervous you will feel during the test.

Picture It!!!!!!

Can you see it in your mind?

Try closing your eyes and picturing notes in your mind.

Draw your own icons while studying to help you remember ideas.

Highlight study notes in different colors.

The colors will help you remember when you take the test.

-Keep Trying

Effort Pays-

The more you strive to do your personal best, the more success you will have over time!

Vocabulary Word List

Ability	- skilled
According	- with evidence
Advantages	- benefits or gain
Aesop	- fables written long ago teaching a lesson
Affect	- produce an effect
Aids	- provide help or support
Alliteration	- same sounding words
Analyzing	- look closely at
Ancient	- times long ago
Applying	- put to practical use
Arrangement	- put in order
Article	- nonfiction piece of writing
Attitude	- feeling, opinion, mood
Attracting	- drawing others
Author's purpose	- to inform, to entertain or to persuade (the reason an author writes)
Bold print	- important words that are written very dark
Censor	- to prevent someone from saying what they would like
Characteristics	- distinguishing quality
Classify	- put in order
Climax	- the turning point in the story
Clue	- piece of evidence that helps to solve a problem
Column	- special item
Compare	- check for likeness or differences
Competition	- try to win
Conclusion	- to decide
Consecutive	- one after the other
Contrast	- show differences
Contribution	- give or help along
Conventionally	- an accepted way of behavior
Convey	- pass on information
Convince	- cause to believe
Create	- bring into being
Curious	- eager to learn
Current	- present; up to date
Decide	- make a choice or judgment; bring to a conclusion
Demonstrate	- to show that you know
Describe	- to tell about using words
Descriptive	- to describe something
Determines	- decide on; establish; settle
Developed	- grow; increase
Dialect	- type of language in a country, region or area
Dialogue	- to talk, quotation marks show dialogue
Differ	- not the same
Difference	- unlike; disagree
Difficult	- hard to do
Dimensions	- extent (length and/or size)
Distinguish	- tell apart
Effective	- strong or desired effect
Elaboration	- give details
Emphasize	- stress

Enclose	- include
Encounter	- to come across
Especially	- particularly; notable
Event	- important happening
Evidence	- outward sign; proof; to present facts to support opinion
Exaggeration	- say or write more than is true
Example	- model; representative sample
Except	- omit, excluding, "not"
Excerpt	- brief passage
Experience	- knowledge from doing
Explain	- make clear
Explanation	- give the reason
Explanatory	- explain; to give a reason why
Expression	- make known in words
Fable	- story that teaches a lesson
Fact/object truth	- something that can be proven
Failed	- attempt without success
Feature	- important characteristic
Flashback	- to tell what has happened before
Foreshadowing	- to tell what will happen in the story
Frame	- to arrange
Free verse	- free poetry writing
Generalizations	- reach a general conclusion
Generating	- giving facts
Genre	- types of literature
Graphic organizer	- an outline to organize thoughts/ideas
Humorous	- funny
Illustration	- drawings, pictures or/and graphs
Imagery	- images; figurative language
Imagine	- form a mental picture
Impression	- to give someone a feeling
Include	- have or consider
Inferences	- draw conclusion; to use clues to gather the rest of the information
Influence	- to guide
Information	- knowledge, facts
Informative	- giving a lot of knowledge
Integrating	- bringing together
Interested	- keeping someone's attention
Interview	- a meeting where someone asks questions
Introduction	- show for the first time
Invisible	- cannot be seen by the naked eye
Italics	- Example; <i>most, best, least, except, and not</i>
Knowledge	- state of knowing
Least	- smallest
Literary type	- relating to literature
Literature	- forms/types of writings
Medium	- way of communication
Mention	- refer to
Metaphor	- making comparisons without using like or as
Method	- procedure for achieving an end
Misleading	- give wrong advice
Modern	- in the present
Mood	- state of mind/feeling
Moral	- principles of right and wrong
Motivate	- provide with a motive (make a person do something)

Myths	- story about an imaginary person or thing
Narrator	- the person telling the story
Observe	- to see and study
Omit	- to leave out
Operates	- perform work
Opinion	- belief; judgment
Organizing	- putting in order
Original	- something a copy is made from
Parentheses	- Example ()
Parody	- funny imitation
Passage	- literary selection
Personality traits	- the way a person behaves
Personification	- give an object human characteristics
Persuasive	- convince by writing or speaking
Plot	- the events in the story; the problem, climax, resolution (solution)
Poem	- writing in verse
Poet	- writer of poetry
Poetry	- poems
Point-of-view	- how the author or character sees the events in the story
Potentially	- something that could happen
Predict	- tell what will happen
Priorities	- what is most important
Probably	- have a good chance of happening
Process	- series of actions
Prop	- support, make stronger
Props	- pictures for a play/drama to support the scene
Purpose	- the aim; the resolution
Qualities	- characteristics
Quotations	- what someone has said
Quotation marks	- “ “
React	- act in response to an influence
Reaction	- action or emotion caused by and directly related to another action
Refer	- direct or send to someone or someplace
Reference	- resources used for research
Reinforce	- support, make stronger
Relate	- show a connection between
Relevant information	- information that is in the passage that is related to the topic
Replace	- take the place of
Represent	- a sign or symbol
Research	- careful investigation
Sarcasm	- cutting or witty remark
Selection	- passage
Sensory perceptions	- using your senses
Simile	- using like or as to make comparisons
Skimming	- read quickly
Strategy	- worked out plan of action
Subheading	- words that appear as subtopics
Summarize	- to tell what you read in a couple of sentences
Supplementary	- thing that adds up or makes up for a lack, additional
Survey	- look over and examine closely
Technique	- way of accomplishing (doing) things
Theme	- the aim or central part of the story
Visualize	- see with words or imagination

Test Skills

- Find out what kind of test you're getting (multiple choice, essay-type)
- Avoid cramming
- Set up a study schedule to review everything well before the test. Use your planner to keep track.
- Write out likely test questions and answer them.
- Get enough rest the night before.
- Wear comfortable clothing.
- Take all the necessary tools: pens, pencils, erasers, calculator, highlighter, etc.

- Don't start writing as soon as you get the test.
- First, skim the exam to make sure you have it all.
- Then, read the instructions.
- Highlight key words like discuss, compare, and list...
- Quickly estimate how much time you have to answer questions.

- Answer easier questions first to boost your confidence.
- Read questions several times to be sure you understand exactly what is being asked.
- Never rush through questions in a panic. Be calm and pace yourself.
- Try to leave some time before the test is over to review and correct errors.
- If you run out of time on a certain question, leave some room and return to it later.

- Don't guess unless there is no penalty for wrong answers
- Before looking at the possible answers, try to form the answer in your mind
- Don't change an answer that comes to mind unless you're absolutely sure it is wrong

- Always write answers in paragraph form unless a list is specifically asked for.
- Answer essay questions this way:
 - 1) Make a rough outline.
 - 2) Begin with a topic sentence that includes the key words of the question.
 - 3) Support your position with specific examples and detailed information.
 - 4) Conclude by very briefly summing up your answer.

Why Should I Take the Michigan Merit Exam (ACT)?

1. Your ACT test scores can be used by colleges that you may apply to. You do not have to pay!
2. Your Michigan Merit Score may earn you money! Possibly \$2,500 if you do well on the exam.
3. This fulfills a Plymouth-Canton Community School graduation requirement.

Strategies for Taking the ACT Test

The ACT measures the knowledge, understanding, and skills that you have acquired throughout your education. Although the sum total of what a person has learned cannot easily be changed, your performance in a specific area can be affected by adequate preparation, especially if it has been some time since you have taken a course in that area.

There are three strategies that can help you prepare yourself for the content included in the ACT:

Familiarize yourself with the content of the ACT tests

Review the information about the tests that is provided on the following pages. Note which content areas make up a large proportion of the tests and which do not. The specific topics included in each content area are examples of possible topics; they do not include all of the possibilities.

Refresh your knowledge and skills in the content area

Review those content areas you have studied but do not have freshly in your mind. Spend your time refreshing your knowledge and skills in the content areas that make up large portions of the tests.

Identify the content areas you have not studied

If unfamiliar content areas make up major portions of the tests, consider taking coursework to help you gain knowledge and skills in these areas before you take the ACT. Because the ACT measures knowledge and skills acquired over a period of time, it is unlikely that a “cram” course covering material that is unfamiliar to you will help you improve your scores. Longer-term survey courses will be most helpful to you, because they aim to improve your knowledge through sustained learning and practice.

- Carefully read the instructions on the cover of the test booklet.
- Read the directions for each section carefully.
- Read each question carefully.
- Pace yourself—don't spend too much time on a single passage or question.
- Use a soft lead No. 2 pencil with a good eraser; do not use a mechanical pencil, ink pen or correction fluid.
- Answer the easy questions first, then go back and answer the more difficult ones.
- On difficult questions, eliminate as many incorrect answers as you can, then make an educated guess among those remaining.
- Answer every question. Your scores on the multiple-choice tests are based on the number of questions you answer correctly. There is no penalty for guessing.
- Review your work. If you finish a test before time is up, go back and check your work.
- Mark your answers neatly. If you erase, erase completely and cleanly without smudging.
- Do not mark or alter any ovals on a test or continue writing on the Writing Test after time has been called or you will be disqualified from the exam.
- If you are taking the Writing Test, see these Writing Test tips.

ACT - English Test Strategies

The English Test is a 75-question, 45-minute test that measures your understanding of the conventions of standard written English (punctuation, grammar and usage, and sentence structure) and of rhetorical skills (strategy, organization, and style). Spelling, vocabulary, and rote recall of rules of grammar are not tested. The test consists of five essays, or passages, each of which is accompanied by a sequence of multiple-choice test questions. Different passage types are employed to provide a variety of rhetorical situations. Passages are chosen not only for their appropriateness in assessing writing skills but also to reflect students' interests and experiences.

Some questions refer to underlined portions of the passage and offer several alternatives to the portion underlined. You must decide which choice is most appropriate in the context of the passage. Some questions ask about an underlined portion, a section of the passage, or the passage as a whole. You must decide which choice best answers the question posed. Many questions offer "NO CHANGE" to the passage as one of the choices. The questions are numbered consecutively. Each question number refers to a correspondingly numbered portion underlined in the passage or to a corresponding numeral in a box located at the appropriate point in the passage.

Please see website for examples. www.actstudent.org/sampletest

Three scores are reported for the ACT English Test: a total test score based on all 75 questions, a sub score in Usage/Mechanics based on 40 questions, and a sub score in Rhetorical Skills based on 35 questions.

Tips for taking the ACT English Test

****Pace Yourself***

The ACT English Test contains 75 questions to be completed in 45 minutes. If you spend 1½ minutes skimming through each passage before responding to the questions, then you will have 30 seconds to answer each question. IF possible, spend less time on each question and use the remaining time allowed for this test to review your work and return to the questions that were most difficult for you.

****Be aware of the writing style used in each passage***

The five passages cover a variety of topics and are written in a variety of styles. It is important that you take into account the writing style used in each passage when you respond to the questions. In responding to a question, be sure to understand the context of the question. Consider how the sentence containing an underlined portion fits in with the surrounding sentences and into the passage as a whole.

****Examine the underlined portions of the passage***

Before responding to a question with an underlined portion, carefully examine what is underlined in the text. Consider the elements of writing that are included in each underlined portion. Some questions will ask you to base your decision on some specific element of writing, such as the tone or emphasis the text should convey. Some questions will ask you to choose the alternative to the underlined portion that is NOT or LEAST acceptable. The answer choices for each question will contain changes in one or more of those elements of writing.

****Be Aware of questions with no underlined portions***

You will be asked some questions about a section of the passage or about the passage as a whole, in light of a given rhetorical situation. Questions of this type are often identified by a question number in a box located at the appropriate point in the passage. Questions asking global questions about the entire passage are placed at the end of the passage and introduced by a horizontal box enclosing the following instruction: “Questions _____ and _____ ask about the preceding passage as a whole.”

****Note the differences in the answer choices***

Many of the questions in the test will involve more than one aspect of writing. Examine each answer choice and how it differs from the others. Be careful not to select an answer that corrects one error but causes a different error.

Please see website for examples. www.actstudent.org/sampletest

****Determine the best answer***

Two approaches can be taken to determine the best answer to a question in which you are to choose the best alternative to an underlined portion.

In the first approach, you can reread the sentence or sentences, substituting each of the possible answer choices for the underlined portions to determine what best choice.

In the second approach, you can decide how the underlined portion might best be phrased in standard written English or in terms of the particular question posed. IF you think the underlined portion is the best answer, you should select “NO CHANGE.” IF not, you should check to see whether your phrasing is one of the other answer choices. If you do not find your phrasing, you should choose the best of the answers presented. For questions cued by a number in a box, you must decide which choice is most appropriate in terms of the question posed or the stated rhetorical situation.

****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.

Content Covered by the ACT English Test

Six elements of effective writing are included in the English Test:

- (1) **Punctuation**
- (2) **Grammar and usage**
- (3) **Sentence structure**
- (4) **Strategy**
- (5) **Organization**
- (6) **Style**

The questions covering punctuation, grammar and usage, and sentence structure make up the Usage/Mechanics subscore. The questions covering strategy, organization, and style make up the Rhetorical Skills Subscore. A brief description and the approximate percentage of the test devoted to each element of effective writing are given below.

Usage/Mechanics

Punctuation (13%). Questions in this category test your knowledge of the conventions of internal and end-of-sentence punctuation, with emphasis on the relationship of punctuation to meaning (for example, avoiding ambiguity, indicating appositives).

Grammar and Usage (16%). Questions in this category test your understanding of agreement between subject and verb, between pronoun and antecedent, and between modifiers and the work modified; verb formation; pronoun case; formation of comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs; and idiomatic usage.

Sentence Structure (24%). Questions in this category test your understanding of relationships between and among clauses, placement of modifiers, and shifts in construction.

Rhetorical Skills

Strategy (16%). Questions in this category test how well you develop a given topic by choosing expressions appropriate to an essay's audience and purpose; judging the effect of adding, revising, or deleting supporting material; and judging the relevancy of statements in context.

Organization (15%). Questions in this category test how well you organize ideas and choose effective opening, transitional, and closing sentences.

Style (16%). Questions in this category test how well you choose precise and appropriate words and images, maintain the level of style and tone in an essay, manage sentence elements for rhetorical effectiveness, and avoid ambiguous pronoun references, wordiness, and redundancy.

ACT – Mathematics Test Strategies

The ACT Mathematics Test is a 60-question, 60-minute test designed to assess the mathematical skills students have typically acquired in courses taken up to the beginning of grade 12. The test presents multiple-choice questions that require you to use reasoning skills to solve practical problems in mathematics. Most questions are discrete, but on occasion some may belong to sets of several questions (e.g., several questions based on the same graph or chart). Knowledge of basic formulas and computational skills are assumed as background for the problems, but complex formulas and extensive computation are not required. The material covered on the test emphasizes the major content areas that are prerequisites to successful performance in entry-level courses in college mathematics.

****Use of calculators is permitted on the Mathematics Test.***

Four scores are reported for the ACT Mathematics Test: a total test score based on all 60 questions, a subscore in Pre-Algebra/Elementary Algebra based on 24 questions, a subscore in Intermediate Algebra/Coordinate Geometry based on 18 questions, and a subscore in Plane Geometry/Trigonometry based on 18 questions.

Tips for taking the ACT Mathematics Test

****Pace Yourself***

The ACT Mathematics Test contains 60 questions to be completed in 60 minutes. The maximum estimated time that should be spent on each question is 1 minute. If possible, spend less time on each question and use the remaining time allowed for this test to review your work and return to the questions on this test that were most difficult for you.

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

Remember, all of the mathematics problems can be solved without using a calculator. In fact, some 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 questions before you begin using a calculator to do computations. For many problems, you may not want to use a calculator.

****Solve the problem.***

For working out the solutions to the problems, writing space for scratch work usually is available in the test booklet, or you will be given scratch paper to use. You may wish to glance over the answer choices after reading the questions. However, working backwards from the answer choices provided can take a lot of time and may not be effective.

****Locate 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 in the test will involve several steps. Make sure your answer includes all of the necessary steps. Frequently, questions include answer choices that are based on incomplete solutions.

****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 work.***

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

Please see website for examples. www.actstudent.org/sampletest

Content Covered by the ACT Mathematics Test

Six content areas are included in the Mathematics Test:

- (1) **Pre-algebra**
- (2) **Elementary algebra**
- (3) **Intermediate algebra**
- (4) **Coordinate geometry**
- (5) **Plane geometry**
- (6) **Trigonometry**

The questions covering pre-algebra and elementary algebra make up the Pre-Algebra/Elementary Algebra subscore. The questions covering intermediate algebra and coordinate geometry make up the Intermediate Algebra/Coordinate Geometry subscore. And the Plane Geometry/Trigonometry subscore is based on the questions covering plane geometry and trigonometry. A brief description and the approximate percentage of the test devoted to each content area are given below:

Pre-Algebra/Elementary Algebra

Pre-Algebra 23%. Questions in this content area are based on basic operations using whole numbers, decimals, fractions, and integers; place value; square roots and approximations; the concept of exponents; scientific notation; factors; ratio, proportion, and percent; linear equations in one variable; absolute value and ordering numbers by value; elementary counting techniques and simple probability; data collection, representation, and interpretation; and understanding simple descriptive statistics.

Elementary Algebra 17%. Questions in this content area are based on properties of exponents and square roots, evaluation of algebraic expressions through substitution, using variables to express functional relationships, understanding algebraic operations, and the solution of quadratic equations by factoring.

Intermediate Algebra/Coordinate Geometry

Intermediate Algebra (15%). Questions in this content area are based on an understanding of the quadratic formula, rational and radical expressions, absolute value equations and inequalities, sequences and patterns, systems of equations, quadratic inequalities, functions, modeling, matrices, roots of polynomials, and complex numbers.

Coordinate Geometry (15%). Questions in this content area are based on graphing and the relations between equations and graphs, including points, lines, polynomials, circles, and other curves; graphing inequalities; slope; parallel and perpendicular lines; distance; midpoints; and conics.

Plane Geometry/Trigonometry

Plane Geometry (23%). Questions in this content area are based on the properties and relations of plane figures, including angles and relations among perpendicular and parallel lines; properties of circles, triangles, rectangles, parallelograms, and trapezoids; transformations; the concept of proof and proof techniques; volume; and applications of geometry to three dimensions.

Trigonometry (7%). Questions in this content area are based on understanding trigonometric relations in right triangles; values and properties of trigonometric functions; graphing trigonometric functions; modeling using trigonometric functions; use of trigonometric identities; and solving trigonometric equations.

ACT – Reading Test Strategies

The Reading Test is a 40-question, 35-minute test that measures your reading comprehension. The test questions ask you to derive meaning from several texts by (1) referring to what is explicitly stated and (2) reasoning to determine implicit meanings.

Specifically, questions will ask you to

- use referring and reasoning skills 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;
- and analyze the author's or narrator's voice and method.

The test comprises four prose passages that are representative of the level and kinds of text commonly encountered in college freshman curricula. Each passage is preceded by a heading that identifies what type of passage it is (for example, "Prose Fiction"), names the author, and may include a brief note that helps in understanding the passage. Each passage is accompanied by a set of multiple-choice test questions. These questions do not test the rote recall of facts from outside the passage, isolated vocabulary items, or rules of formal logic.

Please see website for examples. www.actstudent.org/sampletest

Three scores are reported for the ACT Reading Test; a total test score based on all 40 questions, a subscore in Social Studies/Sciences reading skills (based on the 20 questions in the social studies and natural sciences sections of the test), and a subscore in Arts/Literature reading skills (based on the 20 questions in the prose fiction and humanities sections of the test).

Tips for taking the ACT Reading Test

****Pace Yourself.***

The ACT Reading Test contains 40 questions to be completed in 35 minutes. If you spend 2-3 minutes reading each passage, then you will have about 35 seconds to answer each question. If possible, spend less time on the passages and the questions and use the remaining time allowed for this test to review your work and return to the questions on this test that were most difficult for you.

****Read the passage carefully.***

Before you begin answering a question, read the entire passage thoroughly. It is important that you read every sentence rather than skim the text. Be conscious of relationships between or among ideas. You may want to make notes about important ideas in the passage either in the test booklet or on the scratch paper provided.

****Refer to the passage when answering the questions.***

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

Content Covered by the ACT Reading Test

The Reading Test is based on four types of reading selections:

- (1) **The Social Studies**
- (2) **The Natural Sciences**
- (3) **Prose Fiction**
- (4) **Humanities**

A subscore in Social Studies/Sciences reading skills is based on the questions in the social studies and the natural sciences sections of the test, and a subscore in Arts/Literature reading skills is based on the questions in the prose fiction and humanities sections of the test. A brief description and the approximate percentage of the test devoted to each type of reading selection are given below.

Social Studies (25%). Questions in this category are based on passages in the content areas of anthropology, archaeology, biography, business, economics, education, geography, history, political science, psychology, and sociology.

Natural Sciences (25%). Questions in this category are based on passages in the content areas of anatomy, astronomy, biology, botany, chemistry, ecology, geology, medicine, meteorology, microbiology, natural history, physiology, physics, technology, and zoology.

Prose Fiction (25%). Questions in this category are based on intact short stories or excerpts from short stories or novels.

Humanities (25%). Questions in this category are based on passages from memoirs and personal essays and in the content areas of architecture, art, dance, ethics, film, language, literary criticism, music, philosophy, radio, television, and theater.

ACT – Science Test Strategies

The Science Test is a 40-question, 35-minute test that measures the interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem-solving skills required in the natural sciences.

The test presents seven sets of scientific information, each followed by a number of multiple-choice test questions. The scientific information is conveyed in one of three different formats:

- **data representation** (graphs, tables, and other schematic forms)
- **research summaries** (descriptions of several related experiments)
- **conflicting viewpoints** (expressions of several related hypotheses or views that are inconsistent with one another.)

The questions require you to:

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

Please see website for examples. www.actstudent.org/sampletest

The use of calculators is **not** permitted on the Science Test.

One score is reported for the ACT Science Test: a total test score based on all 40 questions.

Tips for taking the ACT Science Test

****Pace Yourself.***

The ACT Science Test contains 40 questions to be completed in 35 minutes. If you spend about 2 minutes reading each passage, then you will have about 30 seconds to answer each question. If possible, spend less time on the passages and the questions and use the remaining time allowed for this test to review your work and return to the questions on this test that were most difficult for you.

****Read the passage carefully.***

Before you begin answering a question, read the scientific material provided. It is important that you read the entire text and examine any tables, graphs, or figures. You may want to make notes about important ideas in the information provided, either in the test booklet or on the scratch paper provided. Some of the information sets will describe experiments. You should consider the experimental design, including the controls and variables, because questions are likely to address this component of scientific research.

****Note different viewpoints in passages.***

Some material will present conflicting points of view, and the questions will ask you to distinguish among the various viewpoints. It may be helpful for you to make notes summarizing each viewpoint, either next to that section in your test booklet (or if you are testing outside the U.S., on the scratch paper provided). For questions that ask you to compare viewpoints, these notes will help you answer more quickly.

Content Covered by the ACT Science Test

The content of the Science Test includes:

- (1) **Biology**
- (2) **Chemistry**
- (3) **Physics**
- (4) **Earth/space sciences**

Advanced knowledge in these subjects is not required, but knowledge acquired in general, introductory science courses is needed to answer some of the questions. The test emphasizes scientific reasoning skills over recall of scientific content, skill in mathematics, or reading ability. The scientific information is conveyed in one of three different formats.

Data Representation (38%). This format presents graphic and tabular material similar to that found in science journals and texts. The questions associated with this format measure skills such as graph reading, interpretation of scatter plots, and interpretation of information presented in tables.

Research Summaries (45%). This format provides descriptions of one or more related experiments. The questions focus upon the design of experiments and the interpretation of experimental results.

Conflicting Viewpoints (17%). This format presents expressions of several hypotheses or view that, being based on differing premises or on incomplete data, are inconsistent with one another. The questions focus upon the understanding, analysis, and comparison of alternative viewpoints or hypotheses.






Please see website for examples. www.actstudent.org/sampletest

ACT – Writing Test Strategies

If you register for the ACT Plus Writing, you will take the ACT Writing Test (which must be completed in English) after you complete the multiple-choice tests. Taking the Writing Test will NOT affect your scores on the multiple-choice tests or the Composite scores for those tests. Rather, you will receive two additional scores; a Combined English/Writing score on a scale of 1 through 36 and a Writing subscore on a scale of 2 through 12. You will also receive some comments on your essay. And your essay will be available to your high school and the colleges to which we report your scores from that test date.

The Writing Test is a 30-minute essay test that measures your writing skills – specifically those writing skills emphasized in high school English classes and in entry-level college composition courses. The test consists of one writing prompt that will define an issue and describe two points of view on that issue. You are asked to write in response to a question about your position on the issue described in the writing prompt. In doing so, you may adopt one or the other of the perspectives described in the prompt, or you may present a different point of view on the issue. Your essay score will not be affected by the point of view you take on the issue. Prompts are designed to be appropriate for response in a 30 minute timed test and to reflect students' interests and experiences.

Your essay will be evaluated on the evidence it gives of your ability to do the following:

-  express judgments by taking a position on the issue in the writing prompt;
-  maintain a focus on the topic throughout the essay;
-  develop a position by using logical reasoning and by supporting your ideas;
-  organize ideas in a logical way; and
-  use language clearly and effectively according to the conventions of standard written English.

Your essay will be scored holistically – that is, on the basis of the overall impression created by all the elements of the writing. Two trained readers will read your essay, each giving it a rating from 1 (low) to 6 (high). The sum of those ratings is your Writing subscore. If the readers' ratings disagree by more than one point, a third reader will evaluate your essay and resolve the discrepancy.

Please see website for examples. www.actstudent.org/sampletest

Tips for taking the ACT Writing Test

****Pace Yourself.***

The ACT Writing Test gives you 30 minutes to read and think about the issue in the prompt, and to plan and write your essay. When asked to write a timed essay, most writers find it useful to do some planning before they write the essay, and to do a final check of the essay when it is finished. It is unlikely that you will have time to draft, revise, and recopy your essay. Therefore, taking a few minutes to plan your essay is a much better strategy than writing a first draft with the intent to copy it over for the final essay.

****Prewrite.***

Some writers like to plunge right in, but this is seldom a good way to do well on a timed essay. Prewriting gets you acquainted with the issue, suggests patterns for presenting your thoughts, and gives you a little breathing room to come up with interesting ideas for introducing and concluding your essay. Before writing, then, carefully consider the prompt and make sure you understand it – reread it if you aren't sure. Decide how you want to answer the question in the prompt. Then jot down your ideas on the topic: this might simply be a list of ideas, reasons, and examples that you will use to explain your point of view on the issue. Write down what you think others might say in opposition to your point of view and think about how you would refute their argument. Think of how best to organize the ideas in your essay. You will be instructed to do your prewriting in your Writing Test booklet. You can refer back to these notes as you write the essay itself on the lined pages in your answer folder.

****Write.***

Once you are ready to write your essay in the answer folder, proceed with the confidence that you have prepared well and that you will have attentive and receptive readers who are interested in your ideas. At the beginning of your essay, make sure readers will see that you understand the issue. Explain your point of view in a clear and logical way. If possible, discuss the issue in a broader context or evaluate the implications or complications of the issue. Address what others might say to refute your point of view and present a counterargument. Use specific examples. Vary the structure of your sentences, and use varied and precise word choices. Make logical relationships clear by using transitional words and phrases. Do not wander off the topic. End with a strong conclusion that summarizes or reinforces your position.

Is it advisable to organize the essay by using a formula, like “the five-paragraph essay”? Points are neither awarded nor deducted for following familiar formulas, so feel free to use one or not as best suits your preference. Some writers find formulas stifling, other writers find them vital, and still other writers just keep them handy in the toolbox to use when needed. The exact numbers of words and paragraphs in your essay are less important than the clarity and development of your ideas. Writers who have something to say usually find that their ideas have a way of sorting themselves out at reasonable length and in the right number of paragraphs.

****Review your essay.***

Take a few minutes before the end of the testing session to read over your essay. Correct any mistakes in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling. If you find any words that are hard to read, recopy them so your readers can read them easily. Make any corrections and revisions neatly, between the lines (but not in the margins). Your readers take into account that you had merely 30 minutes to compose and write your essay. Within that time limit, try to make your essay as polished as you can.

***Practice.**

There are many ways to prepare for the ACT Writing Test. You may be surprised that these include reading newspapers and magazines, listening to news analyses on television or radio, and participating in discussions and debates about issues and problems. These activities help you become more familiar with current issues, with different perspectives on those issues, and with strategies that skilled writers and speakers use to present their points of view.

Of course, one of the best ways to prepare for the ACT Writing Test is to practice writing. Practice writing different kinds of texts, for different purposes, with different audiences in mind. The writing you do in your English classes will help you, so will practice in writing essays, stories, poems, plays, editorials, reports, letters to the editor, a personal journal, or other kinds of writing that you do on your own. Because the ACT Writing Test asks you to explain your perspective on an issue in a convincing way, writing opportunities like editorials or letters to the editor of a newspaper are especially helpful. Practicing a variety of different kinds of writing will help make you a versatile writer able to adjust to different writing occasions and assignments.

It is also a good idea to get some practice writing within a time limit. This will help build skills that are important in college-level learning and in the world of work. Taking the practice ACT Writing Test will give you a good idea of what timed writing is like and how much additional practice you may need. You might want to take the practice ACT Writing Test even if you do not plan to register for it, because all the writing you do contributes to your skill in expressing yourself.

Content covered by the ACT Writing Test

Writing is where form and content come together. To state that more accurately, writing is where you put form and content together. On the ACT Writing Test, a prompt is provided – an issue that has been chosen for its appropriateness in a 30-minute test and for its relevance to students’ interests and experiences. The prompt defines the topic and sets out the task of focusing on that topic in your essay. But the “content” – the arguments and explanations, the analysis and examples, in all their details – is provided by you. BY applying your writing skills to shaping that content, you also provide the “form” of your essay. SO, with regard to the content covered by the Writing Test, you are the author.

Please see website for examples. www.actstudent.org/sampletest

Prohibited Behavior at the Test Center

Examinees will be dismissed and their answer documents will not be scored if they are found:

- Looking back at a test on which time has already been called
- Looking ahead in the test booklet
- Looking at another examinee's test booklet or answer document
- Giving or receiving assistance
- Using an [unauthorized calculator](#)
- Sharing a calculator with another examinee.
- Using a calculator on any test other than the Mathematics Test
- Using any device to share or exchange information at any time during the tests or during breaks (all electronic devices, including cell phones and pagers, must be turned off from the time the examinee is admitted to test until dismissed after testing concludes)



- Attempting to remove test materials, including test questions or answers, from the test room by any means
- Using highlight pens, colored pens or pencils, scratch paper, notes, dictionaries, or other aids
- Not following instructions or abiding by the rules of the test center
- Exhibiting confrontational, threatening, or unruly behavior
- Creating a disturbance or allowing an alarm, pager, or phone to sound in the test room
- Filling in or altering ovals or continuing to write the essay after time has been called on each test