

Preparing for the ACT – Student Test Tips

The ACT is a test based on the curriculum you have been taught from elementary to high school and is commonly accepted as an indicator of college and career readiness by employers, technical colleges, community colleges, and four-year universities. The exam takes three hours and 30 minutes to complete and is scored on a scale of 1–36.

The test consists of four required subject tests: English, mathematics, reading, and science. Your composite score, the average of your four test scores, is often required for entry and/or course placement into a postsecondary institution. Additionally, your ACT score can determine your eligibility for various scholarships and financial aid or be used as an indicator of your readiness for employment.¹

The following table demonstrates the test structure of the ACT.

English	Mathematics	Reading	Science
75 questions	60 questions	40 questions	40 questions
45 minutes	60 minutes	35 minutes	35 minutes

Below you will find a list of basic tips that can help you prepare to do your best on the ACT. In addition to working hard in your classes, use these test tips to score your highest!

- 1. Pace Yourself.** After accounting for time to read passages, questions, and charts, you typically have 30-60 seconds to answer each question. If you get stuck on a question, skip it and come back to it if you have time.
- 2. Answer the easy questions first.** Some questions will be easier for you than others. Try moving quickly through questions when you are confident you know the correct answer. Then, go back to the more difficult questions.
- 3. Read each question carefully.** To get the answer correct, it is important to know what the question is asking. Since all ACT questions are multiple choice, a clear understanding of what the question is asking will help eliminate answers that do not make sense.
- 4. Eliminate wrong answers first.** Use logic to identify wrong answers (e.g., an answer with incorrect grammar). Even if you have to guess your final answer, eliminating an obvious wrong answer will increase your probability of choosing the correct answer.

¹ When you take the ACT, you will receive a score report that will indicate your potential achievement on the National Career Readiness Certificate, an indicator used by some employers to identify candidates to hire, train, or promote. View a sample score report: <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/sample-student-report.pdf>

5. **Answer every question.** There is no penalty for wrong answers; you are awarded points for any question you get correct. Thus, you never want to leave answer spaces blank.
6. **Erase completely.** If you change an answer, be sure to erase completely. Also, pay attention to unintended pencil marks in your answer booklet. Smudges and double-answers can lead to incorrect scoring.
7. **Don't read the directions on test day.** Yes, **do not** waste time reading the directions on test day. Instead, familiarize yourself with the test directions *before* test day so that you can save time by getting straight to work. If you are ready to get started, you can find a full-length practice exam here:
<http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/>.
8. **Be prepared on the test day!** Be sure to get plenty of rest in the days leading up to the test day. On test day, be sure to arrive on time with all required materials and eat a healthy breakfast.

More tips and test preparation resources can be found at: <http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/>.