

Free ACT practice test resources:

(be careful when exploring these resources that they don't link you to sites that will charge money)

https://www.powerscore.com/sat/help/content_practice_tests.cfm

<http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation.html>

<http://blog.prepscholar.com/complete-official-act-practice-tests-free-links>

<http://www.mhpracticeplus.com/act.php>

<https://www.petersons.com/signup/?page=1>

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/act-prep-practice-tests-flashcards/id934027127?mt=8>

<http://www.kaptest.com/act/enroll?zip=55433&tab=events>

<https://www.sophia.org/preparing-for-college/act-test-preparation>

15 ACT Tips and Tricks to Improve Your Score

ACT English Tips

Tip #1: Choose the Most Concise Answer

ACT English questions are looking for answers that result in the most **straightforward, logical sentence structure**. You should try to find the choice that provides all the necessary information for the sentence to make grammatical sense and nothing extra. The best writing says what it needs to say **clearly and concisely**!

Tip #2: Read the Paragraph First

A good plan of attack for the ACT English section is to **read the whole paragraph that contains the sentence you'll be revising before looking at the answer choices**. This will give you some context for your choices and give you a better grasp on the structure of the sentence and how you might need to change it. With this strategy, you'll reduce the number of errors caused by careless misreading.

Tip #3: Be Careful With No Change Answers

On questions for ACT English that ask you to choose the answer that makes a sentence grammatically correct, you will have the option to pick "no change". This is a dangerous choice because if you aren't aware of more obscure grammar rules, you might be tempted to choose it on some questions where the sentence actually can be improved.

It's really important to **double check all the other answers before you settle on "no change" as the correct choice**. However, keep in mind that "no change" really is the answer around [25 - 30% of the time it's an option](#), so don't second guess yourself if you're relatively certain there really isn't an issue. Read the sentence through with each of the possible suggested changes before bubbling in "no change" to ensure you're making the right call.

ACT Math Tips

Tip #4: Pay Attention to Diagrams

The ACT Math section will often provide you with diagrams of figures that describe the problem you're trying to answer. It's important to pay attention to these figures, because **they will give you clues about which answer choices are the most logical**.

If a problem is asking you to figure out an angle, for example, and some of the choices are acute while others are obtuse, you'll be able to eliminate at least a couple of answers just by looking at the diagram. If it doesn't seem like an answer is possible based on the visual aid you are given, it's usually safe to cross it out.

Tip #5: Plug in the Answer

A really important strategy that will help you to be sure you have the correct answer on math problems is to [plug in the answer choices](#). If a question asks you to solve for x, **plug the answer choices back into the original equation and see which one works** - you don't even need to really solve it. This can be more time consuming than just solving the equation if you already know how to do that, so only use it as a last resort if you're stumped.

ACT Reading Tips

Tip #6: Start with Your Strengths

The ACT Reading section is always structured the same way with [four topic areas](#) in the same order that each correspond to a passage or pair of passages. The topics are as follows:

- Prose fiction/literary narrative
- Social science
- Humanities
- Natural science

To make sure you're getting the most out of this section, you should start with reading the passage(s) that correspond to the topic area in which you are most comfortable. This might simply mean starting with subject matter that is most interesting to you and will make for a quicker read. You'll get the questions that are easiest for you out of the way first and won't risk running out of time before you have a chance to answer them.

Tip #7: Skim the Passages

There's a lot of time pressure on the ACT Reading section, so you should attempt to [read the passages](#) as efficiently as possible. For some students, it might be manageable to read passages normally and still have enough time to finish the section, but you have to be a really quick and thorough reader.

The best strategy for most people is to skim the passages instead. In order to skim effectively, you should read the introduction and conclusion paragraphs and the first and last sentences of every body paragraph. This will give you a good overview of the main ideas and allow you to answer most [main point questions](#) about the passage. When you get to questions about [details](#), you can read specific parts of the passage over again if necessary.

ACT Science Tips

Tip #8: Do the Conflicting Viewpoints Section Last

The [conflicting viewpoints section](#) on [ACT Science](#) is usually the most time consuming for students. In case you're not familiar with it, this part of the section asks you to read two or three passages that detail different viewpoints on a scientific issue. You'll then answer questions about these viewpoints and how they relate to one another.

Since this is more reading-intensive and can eat up a lot of time, it's best to save it for last so that you don't end up missing other questions later on in the section that will be quicker and easier for you to answer.

Tip #9: Rely on the Visuals

The ACT Science section hits you with a lot of complicated terminology and unfamiliar facts that make it seem overwhelming. The best policy when faced with all this information is to ignore it and go straight for the graphs, which will provide enough information for you to answer the majority of the questions you're faced with.

Most the information you're given is just extra stuff thrown in there to make this section seem more difficult than it is. [ACT Science is more about logical reasoning](#) and data interpretation than actually knowing any science, so if you can read the graphs you will be fine!

ACT Essay Tips

Tip #10: Pre-Plan Examples

Since [ACT essay prompts](#) are relatively predictable, you can do some of your essay planning before the test to save yourself time and stress. You should [choose concrete examples](#) from art, history, literature, or personal experience; try not to use hypothetical or vague examples to support your points.

Keep in mind that all the facts that you use in your essay don't have to be true. Graders don't have time to fact check, so they take everything you write at face value. This means you can make up statistics or historical facts to support your thesis, and you won't be penalized!

Tip #11: Write a Great Intro and Conclusion

It's likely that the essay graders will read your introduction and conclusion more closely than the rest of your essay. If they can find your thesis easily, you're already on the right track to earning a great score. As long as you have body paragraphs that make sense and support the points outlined in your thesis, graders will likely give you [at least a 4 in the Organization and Ideas and Analysis domains](#).

You'll also need to write a conclusion paragraph that shows a strong understanding of how all your points relate to one another and restates your thesis. If you can demonstrate basic knowledge of how to logically structure an essay and stay on topic, you should be good to go.

Overall ACT Tips

Tip #12: Skip Hard Questions

On the ACT, [time pressure](#) is a very real problem for many students. To avoid losing points, you need to learn to skip questions that are giving you trouble before they take up too much of your time. "Too much of your time" means something different for each section:

- English: more than 30 seconds
- Math: more than a minute
- Reading: more than 45 seconds
- Science: more than 45 seconds

As a rule of thumb, if you feel like you're not any closer to figuring out a question after about 30 seconds of looking at it, you should move on. Just circle the question so it's easy to spot when you want to come back to it later. Make a quick pass through the whole section, and answer all the easy questions first so you don't miss points by running out of time before you get through everything.

Tip #13: Use Process of Elimination

For every section of the ACT, **use process of elimination as your main strategy for attacking tough or confusing questions.** This ties into the [fundamental rule of ACT reading](#), which says that for every question there is only one completely correct answer, and the rest can be eliminated based on evidence in the passage. Process of elimination is more foolproof than trying to pick out the correct answer from the pack. Look for reasons to get rid of choices rather than reasons why they might

work. This will help you be more picky about which answer you bubble in and will prevent you from thinking that more than one answer might be correct.

If there's even one tiny thing out of place in an answer choice, get rid of it!

Tip #14: Bubble at the End, and Fill in Every Bubble

You can save time on the ACT by waiting until the end of a section to bubble in your answers. This cuts down on your time per question because you avoid the process of going back and forth between your test booklet and answer sheet. It's more efficient to circle the answers you choose in your test booklet and then fill them in all at once later. Before using this tip, make sure that you can reliably finish the section with at least 3-5 minutes to spare! Don't risk running into a situation where you don't have enough time to bubble in your answers even though you've gone through all the questions.

Also, there is [no penalty for guessing](#) on the ACT, so you should fill in every bubble! An incorrect answer and an unanswered question both have the same impact on your raw score.

Tip #15: Stay Calm

The most important thing to remember during the test is to keep a cool head. Especially given the time pressure, students who suffer from test anxiety often freak out if they have to skip a few questions. Don't let this happen to you! Keep moving forward, and answer whatever you can. You may find questions that initially seemed impossible are much easier when you come back to them.

The nice thing about the ACT is that once you get through a section, you're completely done with that subject. You won't have to worry about it until the next time you take the test (if that time even comes).

Review

You can quickly improve your scores on the ACT if you remember to use these 15 tips during the test!

ACT English Tips

1. Choose the Most Concise Answer
2. Read the Whole Paragraph First
3. Be Careful with No Change Answers

ACT Math Tips

4. Use the Diagrams
5. Plug in the Answers

ACT Reading Tips

6. Read to Your Strengths
7. Skim Passages

ACT Science Tips

8. Do Conflicting Viewpoints Last
9. Rely on the Visuals

ACT Essay Tips

10. Preplan Examples
11. Write a Great Intro and Conclusion

Overall ACT Tips

12. Skip Hard Questions
13. Use Process of Elimination
14. Bubble at the End and Fill in Every Bubble
15. Stay Calm

Remember, **these are quick fixes that aren't substitutes for studying content and gaining a deeper [understanding of your mistakes](#).**

