

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards—English

These Standards describe what students who score in specific score ranges on the English Test of ACT Explore®, ACT Plan®, and the ACT® college readiness assessment are likely to know and be able to do.

Score Range	PRODUCTION OF WRITING Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus (TOD)
13–15	TOD 201. Delete material because it is obviously irrelevant in terms of the topic of the essay
16–19	TOD 301. Delete material because it is obviously irrelevant in terms of the focus of the essay TOD 302. Identify the purpose of a word or phrase when the purpose is simple (e.g., identifying a person, defining a basic term, using common descriptive adjectives) TOD 303. Determine whether a simple essay has met a straightforward goal
20–23	TOD 401. Determine relevance of material in terms of the focus of the essay TOD 402. Identify the purpose of a word or phrase when the purpose is straightforward (e.g., describing a person, giving examples) TOD 403. Use a word, phrase, or sentence to accomplish a straightforward purpose (e.g., conveying a feeling or attitude)

Students who score in the 1–12 range are most likely beginning to develop the knowledge and skills assessed in the other ranges.

The ACT College Readiness Benchmark for English is 18. Students who achieve this score on the ACT English Test have a 50% likelihood of achieving a B or better in a first-year English Composition course at a typical college. The knowledge and skills highly likely to be demonstrated by students who meet the Benchmark are shaded.

The corresponding Benchmark for ACT Explore Grade 8 is 13; for Grade 9, it's 14. The Benchmark for ACT Plan is 15. Students who achieve these scores are on track to meet the Benchmark on the ACT.

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Score Range	PRODUCTION OF WRITING Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus (TOD)
24–27	TOD 501. Determine relevance of material in terms of the focus of the paragraph TOD 502. Identify the purpose of a word, phrase, or sentence when the purpose is fairly straightforward (e.g., identifying traits, giving reasons, explaining motivations) TOD 503. Determine whether an essay has met a specified goal TOD 504. Use a word, phrase, or sentence to accomplish a fairly straightforward purpose (e.g., sharpening an essay’s focus, illustrating a given statement)
28–32	TOD 601. Determine relevance when considering material that is plausible but potentially irrelevant at a given point in the essay TOD 602. Identify the purpose of a word, phrase, or sentence when the purpose is subtle (e.g., supporting a later point, establishing tone) or when the best decision is to delete the text in question TOD 603. Use a word, phrase, or sentence to accomplish a subtle purpose (e.g., adding emphasis or supporting detail, expressing meaning through connotation)
33–36	TOD 701. Identify the purpose of a word, phrase, or sentence when the purpose is complex (e.g., anticipating a reader’s need for background information) or requires a thorough understanding of the paragraph and essay TOD 702. Determine whether a complex essay has met a specified goal TOD 703. Use a word, phrase, or sentence to accomplish a complex purpose, often in terms of the focus of the essay

Score Range	PRODUCTION OF WRITING Organization, Unity, and Cohesion (ORG)
13–15	ORG 201. Determine the need for transition words or phrases to establish time relationships in simple narrative essays (e.g., <i>then, this time</i>)
16–19	ORG 301. Determine the most logical place for a sentence in a paragraph ORG 302. Provide a simple conclusion to a paragraph or essay (e.g., expressing one of the essay's main ideas)
20–23	ORG 401. Determine the need for transition words or phrases to establish straightforward logical relationships (e.g., <i>first, afterward, in response</i>) ORG 402. Determine the most logical place for a sentence in a straightforward essay ORG 403. Provide an introduction to a straightforward paragraph ORG 404. Provide a straightforward conclusion to a paragraph or essay (e.g., summarizing an essay's main idea or ideas) ORG 405. Rearrange the sentences in a straightforward paragraph for the sake of logic

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Score Range	PRODUCTION OF WRITING Organization, Unity, and Cohesion (ORG)
24–27	ORG 501. Determine the need for transition words or phrases to establish subtle logical relationships within and between sentences (e.g., <i>therefore</i>, <i>however</i>, <i>in addition</i>) ORG 502. Provide a fairly straightforward introduction or conclusion to or transition within a paragraph or essay (e.g., supporting or emphasizing an essay's main idea) ORG 503. Rearrange the sentences in a fairly straightforward paragraph for the sake of logic ORG 504. Determine the best place to divide a paragraph to meet a particular rhetorical goal ORG 505. Rearrange the paragraphs in an essay for the sake of logic
28–32	ORG 601. Determine the need for transition words or phrases to establish subtle logical relationships within and between paragraphs ORG 602. Determine the most logical place for a sentence in a fairly complex essay ORG 603. Provide a subtle introduction or conclusion to or transition within a paragraph or essay (e.g., echoing an essay's theme or restating the main argument) ORG 604. Rearrange the sentences in a fairly complex paragraph for the sake of logic and coherence
33–36	ORG 701. Determine the need for transition words or phrases, basing decisions on a thorough understanding of the paragraph and essay ORG 702. Provide a sophisticated introduction or conclusion to or transition within a paragraph or essay, basing decisions on a thorough understanding of the paragraph and essay (e.g., linking the conclusion to one of the essay's main images)

Score Range	KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE Knowledge of Language (KLA)
13–15	KLA 201. Revise vague, clumsy, and confusing writing that creates obvious logic problems
16–19	KLA 301. Delete obviously redundant and wordy material KLA 302. Revise expressions that deviate markedly from the style and tone of the essay
20–23	KLA 401. Delete redundant and wordy material when the problem is contained within a single phrase (e.g., “alarmingly startled,” “started by reaching the point of beginning”) KLA 402. Revise expressions that deviate from the style and tone of the essay KLA 403. Determine the need for conjunctions to create straightforward logical links between clauses KLA 404. Use the word or phrase most appropriate in terms of the content of the sentence when the vocabulary is relatively common

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24–27	KLA 501. Revise vague, clumsy, and confusing writing KLA 502. Delete redundant and wordy material when the meaning of the entire sentence must be considered KLA 503. Revise expressions that deviate in subtle ways from the style and tone of the essay KLA 504. Determine the need for conjunctions to create logical links between clauses KLA 505. Use the word or phrase most appropriate in terms of the content of the sentence when the vocabulary is uncommon
28–32	KLA 601. Revise vague, clumsy, and confusing writing involving sophisticated language KLA 602. Delete redundant and wordy material that involves fairly sophisticated language (e.g., “the outlook of an aesthetic viewpoint”) or that sounds acceptable as conversational English KLA 603. Determine the need for conjunctions to create subtle logical links between clauses KLA 604. Use the word or phrase most appropriate in terms of the content of the sentence when the vocabulary is fairly sophisticated
33–36	KLA 701. Delete redundant and wordy material that involves sophisticated language or complex concepts or where the material is redundant in terms of the paragraph or essay as a whole KLA 702. Use the word or phrase most appropriate in terms of the content of the sentence when the vocabulary is sophisticated

Score Range	CONVENTIONS OF STANDARD ENGLISH GRAMMAR, USAGE, AND PUNCTUATION Sentence Structure and Formation (SST)
13–15	SST 201. Determine the need for punctuation or conjunctions to join simple clauses SST 202. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense between simple clauses in a sentence or between simple adjoining sentences
16–19	SST 301. Determine the need for punctuation or conjunctions to correct awkward-sounding fragments and fused sentences as well as obviously faulty subordination and coordination of clauses SST 302. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense and voice when the meaning of the entire sentence must be considered
20–23	SST 401. Recognize and correct marked disturbances in sentence structure (e.g., faulty placement of adjectives, participial phrase fragments, missing or incorrect relative pronouns, dangling or misplaced modifiers, lack of parallelism within a simple series of verbs)

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Score Range	CONVENTIONS OF STANDARD ENGLISH GRAMMAR, USAGE, AND PUNCTUATION Sentence Structure and Formation (SST)
24–27	SST 501. Recognize and correct disturbances in sentence structure (e.g., faulty placement of phrases, faulty coordination and subordination of clauses, lack of parallelism within a simple series of phrases) SST 502. Maintain consistent and logical verb tense and pronoun person on the basis of the preceding clause or sentence
28–32	SST 601. Recognize and correct subtle disturbances in sentence structure (e.g., dangles where the intended meaning is clear but the sentence is ungrammatical, faulty subordination and coordination of clauses in long or involved sentences) SST 602. Maintain consistent and logical verb tense and voice and pronoun person on the basis of the paragraph or essay as a whole
33–36	SST 701. Recognize and correct very subtle disturbances in sentence structure (e.g., weak conjunctions between independent clauses, run-ons that would be acceptable in conversational English, lack of parallelism within a complex series of phrases or clauses)

Score Range	CONVENTIONS OF STANDARD ENGLISH GRAMMAR, USAGE, AND PUNCTUATION Usage Conventions (USG)
13–15	USG 201. Form the past tense and past participle of irregular but commonly used verbs USG 202. Form comparative and superlative adjectives
16–19	USG 301. Determine whether an adjective form or an adverb form is called for in a given situation USG 302. Ensure straightforward subject-verb agreement USG 303. Ensure straightforward pronoun-antecedent agreement USG 304. Use idiomatically appropriate prepositions in simple contexts USG 305. Use the appropriate word in frequently confused pairs (e.g., <i>there</i> and <i>their</i>, <i>past</i> and <i>passed</i>, <i>led</i> and <i>lead</i>)
20–23	USG 401. Use the correct comparative or superlative adjective or adverb form depending on context (e.g., “He is the oldest of my three brothers”) USG 402. Ensure subject-verb agreement when there is some text between the subject and verb USG 403. Use idiomatically appropriate prepositions, especially in combination with verbs (e.g., <i>long for</i>, <i>appeal to</i>) USG 404. Recognize and correct expressions that deviate from idiomatic English

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24–27	USG 501. Form simple and compound verb tenses, both regular and irregular, including forming verbs by using <i>have</i> rather than <i>of</i> (e.g., <i>would have gone</i>, not <i>would of gone</i>) USG 502. Ensure pronoun-antecedent agreement when the pronoun and antecedent occur in separate clauses or sentences USG 503. Recognize and correct vague and ambiguous pronouns
28–32	USG 601. Ensure subject-verb agreement in some challenging situations (e.g., when the subject-verb order is inverted or when the subject is an indefinite pronoun) USG 602. Correctly use reflexive pronouns, the possessive pronouns <i>its</i> and <i>your</i>, and the relative pronouns <i>who</i> and <i>whom</i> USG 603. Use the appropriate word in less-common confused pairs (e.g., <i>allude</i> and <i>elude</i>)
33–36	USG 701. Ensure subject-verb agreement when a phrase or clause between the subject and verb suggests a different number for the verb USG 702. Use idiomatically and contextually appropriate prepositions in combination with verbs in situations involving sophisticated language or complex concepts

Score Range	CONVENTIONS OF STANDARD ENGLISH GRAMMAR, USAGE, AND PUNCTUATION Punctuation Conventions (PUN)
13–15	PUN 201. Delete commas that create basic sense problems (e.g., between verb and direct object)
16–19	PUN 301. Delete commas that markedly disturb sentence flow (e.g., between modifier and modified element) PUN 302. Use appropriate punctuation in straightforward situations (e.g., simple items in a series)
20–23	PUN 401. Delete commas when an incorrect understanding of the sentence suggests a pause that should be punctuated (e.g., between verb and direct object clause) PUN 402. Delete apostrophes used incorrectly to form plural nouns PUN 403. Use commas to avoid obvious ambiguity (e.g., to set off a long introductory element from the rest of the sentence when a misreading is possible) PUN 404. Use commas to set off simple parenthetical elements

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24–27	PUN 501. Delete commas in long or involved sentences when an incorrect understanding of the sentence suggests a pause that should be punctuated (e.g., between the elements of a compound subject or compound verb joined by <i>and</i>) PUN 502. Recognize and correct inappropriate uses of colons and semicolons PUN 503. Use punctuation to set off complex parenthetical elements PUN 504. Use apostrophes to form simple possessive nouns
28–32	PUN 601. Use commas to avoid ambiguity when the syntax or language is sophisticated (e.g., to set off a complex series of items) PUN 602. Use punctuation to set off a nonessential/nonrestrictive appositive or clause PUN 603. Use apostrophes to form possessives, including irregular plural nouns PUN 604. Use a semicolon to link closely related independent clauses
33–36	PUN 701. Delete punctuation around essential/restrictive appositives or clauses PUN 702. Use a colon to introduce an example or an elaboration