

Understanding Your ACT Engage[®] Results

ACT[®] Engage[®]
Grades 10–12



Contact Information

For assistance, call ACT Engage Customer Service at 319.337.1893, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., central time, Monday through Friday, or email engage@act.org.

Resources

To access User Guides, Resources for Students and Parents, Research, and Case Studies, visit act.org/engage/downloads.html.

What is ACT Engage Grades 10–12?

ACT Engage Grades 10–12 is an ACT survey that will help you identify your strengths and needs for several skills that are required to graduate from high school and successfully transition to college. ACT Engage looks at how you see yourself, your commitment to education, your opinions about school, and your behaviors. It is designed for students in grades 10 through 12.

How do I take ACT Engage?

ACT Engage can be taken online through a link distributed by your school.

ACT Engage Grades 10–12 asks you to “self report” on your own behaviors, opinions, feelings, and other characteristics. Because you are answering based on your thoughts and opinions, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers and you will not be graded on your results. There are 108 questions and it will take you about 30 minutes to complete.

How do I get my results?

You will receive a Student Report either from your teacher or counselor at school. Your school will also get a copy of your report so your teacher or counselor can go over your results with you. Please see the next section for information about understanding your report.

Although you may benefit from reading your results on your own, ACT Engage usually works best when you are able to talk about your results with an adult at your school or a family member who can help you decide what to focus on first. There may be many things you want to do to build on your strengths and improve skills where you are not as strong.

What do your scores mean?

ACT Engage looks at 10 different areas that are important to your academic success. Information about each scale is provided later in this guide, along with sample items and some suggestions of things you and your parents or teachers can do to use your results.

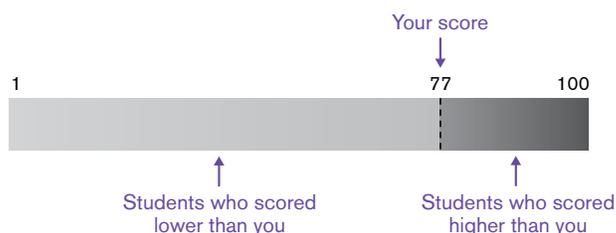
This guide also includes a sample of a Student Report like the one you will receive after taking ACT Engage. The report lists your personal information (your name, school name, grade, ID number, etc.) at the top. Below that information is a short explanation of ACT Engage, and a graph that shows your scores in each area.

There are two different scores that you receive for each ACT Engage scale. The “scale scores” can be anywhere between 10 and 60. ACT Engage takes your responses to questions on the survey and translates them into numbers, just like your teachers turn your quiz or test answers into scores. The scale scores determine your “percentile scores,” which show how you are doing in relation to other students in your grade across the United States who have taken ACT Engage. The percentile scores can be anywhere between 1 (the lowest score you can receive) and 99 (the highest score you can receive).

The percentile scores are the best numbers to help you understand your strengths and needs. The bars on the graph represent your percentile scores, sorted from high to low. The highest percentile scores (your biggest strengths) are shown at the top of the graph, the middle scores (areas where you are doing OK but may want to develop) in the middle, and lower scores (areas you should especially focus on strengthening) are shown at the bottom of the graph.

To better understand what is meant by the word “percentile,” take a look at the sample Student Report on the following page. The student scored in the 77th percentile on Goal Striving, meaning that he or she scored the same as or higher than 77% of all students in the United States who have taken ACT Engage. Your percentile score helps you understand how you are doing in relation to other students. Take a look at the illustration below. The line in the middle of the right side of the bar graph shows that you scored a 77% on Goal Striving. The light-colored section of the bar represents students who scored lower than you, and the dark-colored section represents those who scored higher than you did.

Goal Striving Scale



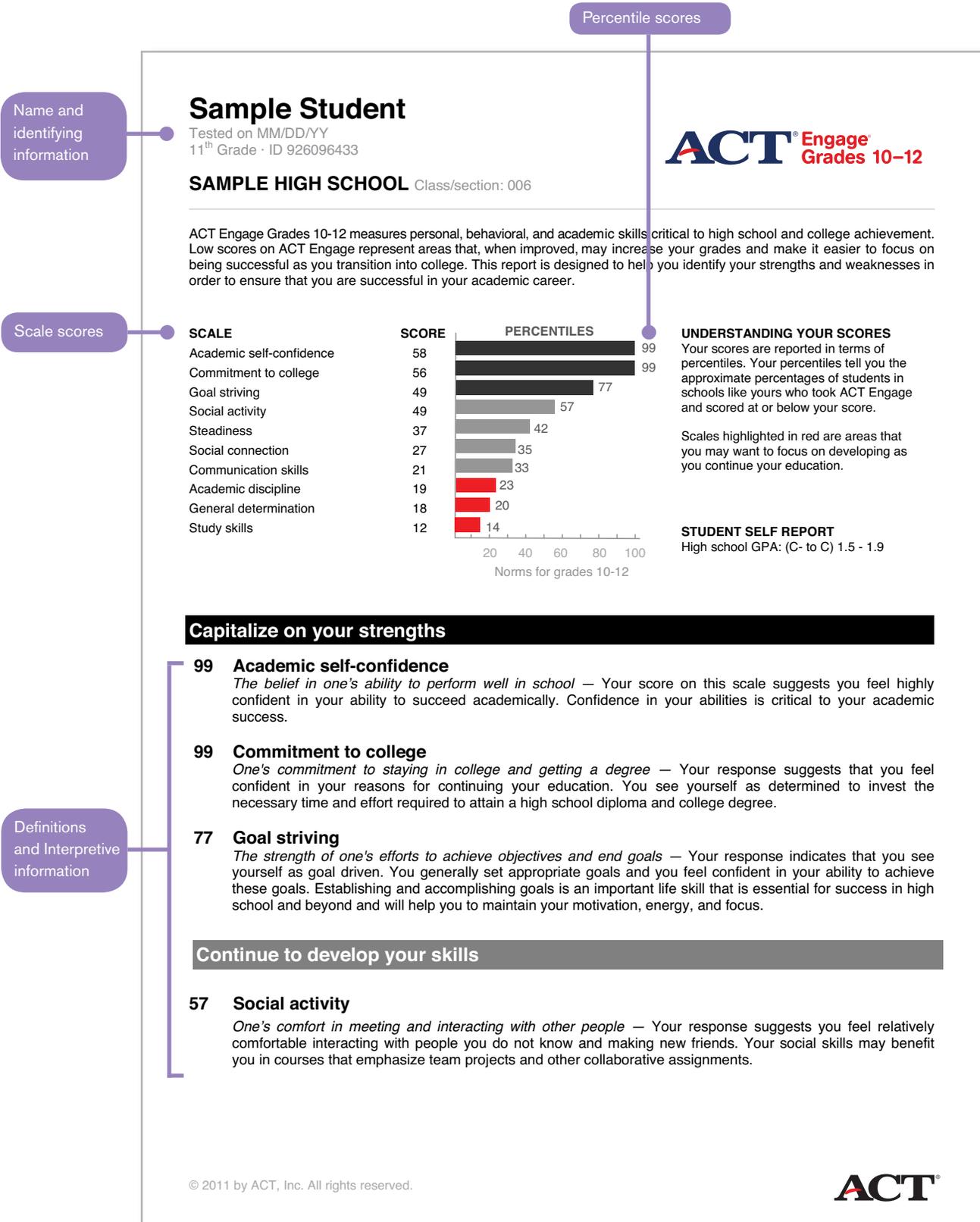
In general, any percentiles higher than 75 indicate areas where a student is already strong. This student will probably want to spend less time working on strengthening Goal Striving since he or she is already doing well in this area.

This student scored in the 14th percentile on *Study Skills*, meaning that he or she scored the same as or higher than 14% of students in the United States who have taken ACT Engage. Usually, any percentiles at or below 25 indicate areas where a student may be having a tough time and that he or she should develop further. This student may want to work on *Study Skills* before working on other skills, since he or she is not as strong on this scale as most other students.

In the sample report, you will also notice that just below the graph, your percentile scores will be listed alongside a definition for each scale and some information about what your score on that scale means. The next section of this guide gives you more information about each scale, some samples of the questions that are part of each scale, and some suggestions for what you might do to strengthen your skills.

ACT Engage is a tool that is designed to help you do better in school. It is important to understand that your scores on these scales were created based on your own responses to questions about yourself. Low scores on any of these scales indicate that YOU see yourself in a certain way. They do not necessarily mean that your teachers, parents, or others see you the same way, so do not feel bad if results are lower than you expect. It is important to discuss your results with an adult who knows you well in order to decide if your scores reflect who you really are. Then create a plan for what you can do to build on your strengths and improve skills where you are not doing as well.

Figure 1 Sample Student Report, front



What Does Each Scale Area Mean?

Academic Discipline

Definition – The degree to which you work hard in school and are committed to doing a good job, shown by the amount of effort invested in completing schoolwork.

Interpretation – This skill is very important for academic success. Students with high Academic Discipline place great value on schoolwork and will make academic tasks, projects, and assignments a high priority. Low scoring students may avoid schoolwork, cut classes, and view other aspects of their lives as more important than the completion of school-related tasks and assignments.

Things you can do – Consider seeking assistance from your parents or adults at your school with setting goals, prioritizing, managing your time, and organizing tasks. You may want to ask yourself the following questions: What would help me to do better in school? Do I need to spend more time studying? What is the most effective way for me to study? Do I need help in learning certain subjects? How important is it for me to earn good grades? Answers to these questions may help you have more discipline in completing your schoolwork.

Sample Items:

- If I don't feel like going, I skip classes.
- People describe me as a hard worker.

Academic Self–Confidence

Definition – The belief in your ability to perform well in school.

Interpretation – Students who are confident in their abilities to do well in school are often better able to persist through challenging tasks. Students who score high in Academic Self–Confidence also are more likely to stay in school and to have higher grades.

Things you can do – To be better prepared to actively participate in classes consider finding time to meet with teachers of classes where you feel less confident. Use that time to ask questions about anything that is unclear or confusing. You can also use that time to share any concerns you may have about upcoming tests. You may want to ask yourself the following questions: Do I like to participate in class? Do I feel like I know as much about class topics as other students? Am I prepared for tests, projects, and assignments?

Sample Items:

- I am a fast learner.
- I am less talented than other students.

Commitment to College

Definition – Your commitment to attending college and getting a degree.

Interpretation – Students who are committed to college are more determined to overcome any obstacles to completing their education because they appreciate the value of a college degree. Students who are committed to college understand the benefits of completing college and earning a degree.

Things you can do – Consider making time to speak with your school guidance counselor or one of your favorite teachers to discuss career interests that require an education beyond high school. Your guidance counselor or teacher can also help with a college search to find schools that have programs related to your career interests. This will allow you to explore college programs and careers as well as to see connections between college majors and careers. You might also consider speaking with friends and family members who are in college about what it was like for them to transition from high school to college. Learning how others handled the transition and overcome obstacles will inform you so you will be better prepared to meet the challenges ahead of you.

Sample Items:

- A college education will help me achieve my goals.
- I am committed to attend and finish college regardless of obstacles.

Communication Skills

Definition – Your consideration of other peoples’ feelings and how well you work out problems with others.

Interpretation – Students who have good communications skills know how to handle problems with others well and work well with people in groups or on teams. Students who communicate well also find it less difficult to make decisions.

Things you can do – Think about how well you listen to others and whether or not you are sensitive to their feelings. You may want to ask yourself the following questions: When I make decisions do I take the feelings of others into account? Do I really listen to a person when he or she is sharing thoughts or feelings with me? When I am having a disagreement with someone, do I calmly try to work out our differences without saying something hurtful to that person? You may wish to consult a school counselor or another adult you trust to help you learn to peacefully resolve conflicts and improve your listening skills.

Sample Items:

- I’m sensitive to others’ feelings.
- I’m willing to compromise when resolving a conflict.

General Determination

Definition – How well you follow through on your commitments and obligations.

Interpretation – Students who have a high level of determination are dependable because they have a strong sense of responsibility to their commitments. Others often see them as trustworthy and likely to keep their promises. Students who score high in General Determination generally earn higher grades.

Things you can do – You may want to take some time to think about how well you keep your promises and commitments. Consider meeting with teachers at school, as well as talking with your parents at home, about how you might become more organized so it will be easier to follow through on your commitments and obligations. This will help you keep your promises while building trust by showing that you take your commitments seriously.

Sample Items:

- I give my undivided attention to something important.
- I am serious about fulfilling my obligations.

Goal Striving

Definition – The amount of effort you put toward reaching your goals and objectives.

Interpretation – Scoring high on this scale means a student knows how to set important goals, makes an effort to reach goals, and is confident about successfully achieving goals and objectives. Students with clear academic goals are more likely to stay in school.

Things you can do – You may want to schedule time to meet with your teachers to discuss and set goals for your individual classes. You should also consider meeting with your guidance counselor to discuss your overall academic goals and objectives. Setting academic goals will help you identify possible career choices and plan for college by helping you select a college major.

Once you have identified your goals you must develop a strategy to help you reach them. For example, if you are really good in math and science and think it would be interesting to become a nurse, find out what you need to do to get into a good nursing program. It is likely you will have to successfully complete specific courses in high school (like anatomy and chemistry) before you can be accepted into a college program. Sometimes students are even required to have a specific minimum grade in those classes. If you want to have a career in nursing, then, you would need to set goals regarding the classes you will take in high school and the grades you will earn. Then you will need to develop strategies to help you reach these goals. Your strategies could include creating schedules, keeping a planner, making time to periodically meet with teachers regarding coursework, and improving your study skills. It is also important to prioritize your goals so you can stay organized.

You must also develop strategies for dealing with challenges or obstacles.

You can't simply give up when things start getting crazy—and they will at some point! Maybe you get a bad grade on test, get sick and fall behind in your classes, or find that a class is harder than you expected it to be. Instead of giving up, you must find ways to persist through the challenges so you can successfully reach your goals. Find out how and where you can get help

if you need it. That way you will be prepared when you find yourself on the verge of collapsing in defeat. If you want something badly enough you can get it—despite the obstacles in your way—if you are prepared and have a back-up plan.

Sample Items:

- I bounce back after facing disappointment or failure.
- Once I set a goal, I do my best to achieve it.

Social Activity

Definition – How comfortable you are in meeting and interacting with other people.

Interpretation – Students who feel comfortable participating in social activities usually do better in school because they feel more confident among their teachers and other students. Students who are confident among their teachers and other students tend to participate more in class. These students tend to do better in those classes. Students who score very low in Social Activity tend to be shy and nervous around others so they avoid social activity. These students sometimes report feeling isolated from other students. Students who score very high in Social Activity may have trouble keeping up with schoolwork because they focus more on social activities rather than on their education.

Things you can do – Ask an adult in your school for a list of clubs and other social activities at your school or ask an adult at home to help you find community activities that may be of interest to you. Make an effort to participate in something you find interesting. This will help you meet new people and make new connections as well as learn more about something of interest to you. If you find it difficult to participate in social activities consider meeting with a school counselor to help you overcome your shyness and anxiety. If you are someone who spends so much time participating in social activities and it is hurting your grades, you may want to consider learning how to prioritize your schoolwork and how to handle social pressures.

Sample Items:

- I avoid activities that require meeting new people.
- I make friends easily.

Social Connection

Definition – How well you feel connected to and involved with your school community.

Interpretation – Students who feel connected to the school community may be more likely to stay at that school, to graduate with a high school diploma, and to go on to complete a college degree.

Things you can do – Ask an adult at your school to help you find a list of extracurricular activities and school-sponsored social events at your school. Identify which activities interest you and make an effort to participate in those that are the most interesting.

Sample Items:

- I feel part of this school.
- I have a sense of connection with others at school.

Steadiness

Definition – How you respond to and manage strong feelings.

Interpretation – Students who score in the middle of the Steadiness Scale are better at managing their emotions and keeping those emotions from negatively impacting other activities. Students who score very high on the scale may have trouble finding ways to deal with emotions that cause stress while low scorers may be easily frustrated or overwhelmed. Students who are able to effectively manage their emotions perform better academically.

Things you can do – Ask an adult at home or school to assist you in developing techniques that help you relax when you become overly stressed or frustrated.

Seek out positive outlets for frustration that help you deal with strong emotions in a healthy manner. For example exercise, meditation, journaling, and working on hobbies are all positive and healthy ways to relieve stress and work through frustration.

Sample Items:

- I get easily irritated.
- I stay calm in difficult situations.

Study Skills

Definition – How well you are able to evaluate an academic problem, come up with a solution, and successfully complete assignments.

Interpretation – Effective study skills improve students’ ability to complete quality assignments that meet teachers’ expectations, which results in improved academic performance.

Things you can do – Ask your teachers to help you develop and improve your study skills. They can help you learn to take good notes, outline tasks, and improve both problem solving and reading skills. It is important to be organized and to learn to manage your time effectively so you can stay on top of your schoolwork. Creating daily and weekly schedules and ‘to do’ lists are effective ways to stay organized. This will help make sure you have time to prepare for tests as well as to finish projects and assignments. It is also important to find your ideal study zone. Ask yourself about the type of settings that are better for studying and working on assignments. Do you prefer absolute silence, soft music, or some quiet background noise? Do you focus better in bright fluorescent light, medium light from reading lamps, soft dim light, or natural light? What room temperature keeps you more alert—hot, warm, mild, or cold? Also be aware of the length of time you can remain focused and whether or not you need to take short breaks while studying or working on assignments. Together, all of these things will help you stay organized and focused so you can do your best work.

Sample Items:

- I summarize important information in diagrams, tables, or lists.
- I organize my thoughts before I prepare for assignments.

A Message to Parents

Education has many benefits. High school and college graduates have more opportunities available to them, including more job options, higher earning potential, and better job security. Getting good grades throughout school, earning a high school diploma, and successfully transitioning from high school to college are critical in order to set students on the right path for future success.

Comparing your student’s behaviors to those of other students, by using the ACT Engage percentile scores as shown on the Student Report, can give you an early indication of whether or not your student has the behavioral skills needed to achieve academic success. The table below lists some questions you should ask when considering ACT Engage results:

The following table suggests some activities you can do with your student to help him or her develop academic behaviors. Strengthening these academic behaviors will help your student be more successful academically and will increase his or her chances of earning a high school diploma and making a successful transition to college.

ACADEMIC BEHAVIORS	DOES MY STUDENT . . .
Academic Discipline	complete assignments on time and stay focused when doing homework?
Academic Self-Confidence	feel academically confident in school?
Commitment to College	seem committed to attending college and getting a degree?
Communication Skills	consider other people’s feelings and calmly resolve problems with others?
General Determination	follow through on commitments and obligations?
Goal Striving	put effort into achieving academic goals?
Social Activity	feel comfortable meeting and interacting with other people socially?
Social Connection	feel socially connected and involved with the school community?
Steadiness	respond well to and effectively manage strong feelings?
Study Skills	evaluate academic problems, develop solutions, and successfully complete assignments?

Below are some activities you can do with your student to help him or her develop academic behaviors. Strengthening these academic behaviors will help your student be more successful academically and will increase his or her chances of earning a high school diploma and making a successful transition to college.

Building Academic Behaviors

Help your student:

- learn to prioritize schoolwork over other activities
- develop goal setting, time management, and organization skills
- by regularly checking to make sure homework is complete and gets turned in

Show family support and involvement in education by:

- emphasizing the value of education to facilitate a better life, in both tangible (earning potential) and intangible ways (quality of life)
- encouraging your student to talk about what he or she is doing in school that he or she finds interesting
- supporting your student's interests and aspirations, both inside and outside of the classroom
- attending both academic and nonacademic school events

Discuss the connections between:

- schoolwork, college majors and careers
- schoolwork and real-life applications
- schoolwork, understanding how the world works, and how to effectively communicate with others
- increased education and the opportunity to become stable financially via higher salaries, lower unemployment rates, and more employment possibilities

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