



The ACT WorkKeys assessment system measures job skills that are valuable for any occupation—skilled or professional—at any level and in any industry.



The ACT National Career Readiness Certificate is an industry-recognized, portable, evidence-based credential that certifies achievement of foundational skills essential for workplace success.

## KEY FACTS

# Validity: A guide to the basics

## What is “validity”?

Validity is a term that describes how successfully a test has achieved its intended result: does it measure what it was designed to measure? Is it an accurate predictor of examinees' performance with respect to what is being measured?

At ACT, every test is the product of multiple layers of intense work and scrutiny by subject matter experts, psychometricians, and other professionals. Validity affirms the value of this dedicated effort. A valid test produces scores that examinees—and others who use the results—can trust. Validity is the very heart of a test's integrity. ACT therefore devotes a great deal of attention to well-documented test score validity for all testing programs.

## How does ACT establish validity?

Let's take a closer look at how we establish the validity of the ACT WorkKeys assessments—the foundation of the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™ (ACT NCRC®).

Two major authorities define the components of validity. Although the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures* (1978) and the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (1999) describe the components in slightly different terms, we can summarize validity as supported by three kinds of evidence: construct, criterion, and content.

## Construct-related evidence

“Construct” refers not to the construction or physical structure of a test but to the overarching attribute it is designed to measure, such as reading ability or personality. Construct-related validity evidence focuses primarily on the test score as an indicator of the accuracy with which the designated attribute is measured. The process of compiling construct-related evidence starts with test development. It continues with observing the relationships between test scores and other variables until we detect a pattern that clearly indicates the meaning of the test score. In other words, the evidence confirms that the test effectively measures the construct—or attribute—it was meant to measure.

## Criterion-related evidence

“Criterion” validity refers to the correlation between test results and outcomes. According to the *Standards* (1999), “the fundamental inference to be drawn from test scores in most applications of testing in employment settings is one of prediction: the test user (e.g., an employer) wishes to make an inference from test results to some future job behavior or outcome.” The satisfactory completion of an aspect of job performance, for example, represents a job outcome—and this makes it a *job criterion*.

One method of collecting criterion-related evidence involves administering the tests to either job applicants or current employees. We then compare those scores to the supervisors' ratings of the test takers' job performance. In short, we're comparing test results to observed behavior or outcomes.

- In a *predictive* study, a test is administered to a group of job *applicants* but is not used for selection decisions. Some of the applicants are hired, and some are not. After those who were hired begin their jobs, their supervisors rate their performance. Test scores are then compared to the performance data.
- In a *concurrent* study, a test is administered to job *incumbents*, and the scores are compared to data describing the incumbents' current job performance. This comparison is based on test data and performance data collected for the same time period.

### Content-related evidence

The *Uniform Guidelines* (1978) suggest that employers who use a content validation strategy should link the content of the test to observable work behaviors, such as job performance. Content-related validity evidence for ACT WorkKeys assessments is established in the workplace by linking test scores (e.g., Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, Locating Information) to the desired job behaviors or job outcomes. The ACT WorkKeys job profiling procedure is well established as a process that meets the standards for content validation established by the *Uniform Guidelines*.

ACT takes pride in our reputation for the validity of the tests we produce. Upon request, we will gladly supply more detailed information on our research and procedures.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

Validity is the heart of a test's integrity, describing how successfully the test has achieved its intended result. ACT adheres to professionally established guidelines to ensure that the ACT WorkKeys assessments meet the standards for construct-related, criterion-related, and content-related evidence—so that users can trust the results.