

## About the ACT Test

The ACT<sup>®</sup> test, introduced in 1959, is the leading college and career readiness test in the US, measuring what students have learned in school to gauge their readiness for success in first-year college coursework. The ACT test is administered on seven national and five international test dates each year. Statewide and districtwide administrations of the ACT provide significant advantages to students, educators and schools for educational and career planning, assessment, instructional support, and evaluation. The ACT test provides meaningful, standardized data on student achievement and readiness, making it a great equalizer of opportunity for *all* students.

## Overview

- 11th/12th-grade assessment that produces college-reportable scores for admissions
- Curriculum and standards-based exam that assesses students' academic readiness for college and career
- Educational and career planning tool to help students plan for the future
- First administered in November of 1959; taken in all 50 states by 1961
- Taken by the majority of high school graduates in 32 states
- Nationally normed scores are universally accepted by all four-year US colleges and universities across the US, including highly selective institutions
- Reporting categories provided in each of the four core subject areas (English, math, reading, and science)
- Provides reporting and insights on STEM readiness, career readiness, and understanding of complex texts
- Writing scores and English/Language Arts (ELA) scores available to students who take optional writing test
- Registration fee for the ACT:  
\$46.00 (no writing test); \$62.50 (with optional writing test)
- Each of the four required ACT subject area tests is scored on a scale of 1-36
- The ACT composite score, also scored on a scale of 1-36, is the average of the student's four required subject test scores
  - Around one-tenth of 1 percent of students who take the ACT earn a top score of 36

## What's Tested

- The ACT comprises subject area tests in:
  - English: 75 questions, 45 minutes, multiple-choice
  - Math: 60 questions, 60 minutes, multiple-choice
  - Reading: 40 questions, 35 minutes, multiple-choice
  - Science: 40 questions, 35 minutes, multiple-choice
  - Writing (optional): 1 writing prompt, 40 minutes, open-ended essay
- Total Testing Time: 2 hours, 55 minutes for the ACT (no writing) and 3 hours, 35 minutes for the ACT with writing

## Intended Users

- The ACT is taken by high school students and college-bound individuals. The score results are used by colleges for admission, course placement and advising purposes and by states, districts, schools, teachers, and students for diagnostic, monitoring, and intervention purposes

## Volume/Users

- Number (and percent) of US high school graduates who took the ACT
  - 2011: 1,623,112 (49%)
  - 2012: 1,666,017 (52%)
  - 2013: 1,799,243 (54%)
  - 2014: 1,845,787 (57%)
  - 2015: 1,924,436 (59%)
  - 2016: 2,090,342 (64%)
- From 2012-2016, the number of ACT-test-taking graduates has increased by 25.5%, while the estimated number of total high school graduates in the US has increased by 1.3%
- In the 2016-2017 school year, 16 states required all 11th graders to take the ACT test as part of their statewide testing programs. This is free for students and funded by states. There were also four states that funded the ACT test for 11th graders on an optional basis (at the district level). Additionally, more than 1,100 individual school districts require all 11th graders to take the ACT at district expense.

### Required

1. Alabama (began in 2014)
2. Arkansas (2016)
3. Hawaii (2013)
4. Kentucky (2007)
5. Louisiana (2013)
6. Mississippi (2015)
7. Missouri (2015)
8. Montana (2013)
9. Nebraska (2017)
10. Nevada (2015)
11. North Carolina (2012)
12. North Dakota (2009)
13. South Carolina (2016)
14. Utah (2014)
15. Wisconsin (2015)
16. Wyoming (2007)

### Optional

1. Minnesota
2. Ohio
3. Oklahoma
4. Tennessee

## Additional Facts

- During registration, test takers complete an interest inventory that provides information to help with career and educational planning and a student profile section that asks about a student's work in high school and future plans
- Of the nearly 2.1 million 2016 high school graduates who took the ACT, just 38% met three or four of the four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks; 34% met none of the benchmarks. The benchmarks are scores on the ACT subject area tests that represent the level of achievement required for students to have a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing, first-year college courses.

## Recent Updates

- In September 2015, ACT introduced enhancements to the optional writing test:
  - The prompt was revised. Examinees are offered three diverse perspectives on an issue and are asked to 1) analyze and evaluate the perspectives given, 2) state and develop their own perspectives on the issue, and 3) explain the relationship between their perspective and the other perspectives given.
  - The reported scores were revised. Examinees receive a subject-level writing score on a 2-12 scale, and individual domain scores for "Ideas and analysis," "Development and Support," "Organization," and "Language Use and Conventions," on a 2-12 scale.
- In September 2015, ACT added four new scores/indicators on score sheets:
  - **Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) score:** Represents a student's overall performance on the science and math portions of the assessment on the 1-36 scale. The ACT is the only national college admission exam to measure science skills. This new STEM score helps students connect their strengths to career and study paths that they might not otherwise have considered, especially when used with their results from the ACT Interest Inventory.
  - **English Language Arts (ELA) score:** This score, also on the 1-36 scale, combines achievement on the English, reading, and writing portions of the ACT for those who take all three sections, enabling students to see how their performance compares with others who have been identified as college ready. A student must take the optional writing test to receive this score.
  - **Progress Toward Career Readiness Indicator:** Helps students understand their progress toward career readiness and helps educators prepare their students for success in a variety of career pathways. It provides an indicator of future performance on the ACT<sup>®</sup> National Career Readiness Certificate<sup>®</sup> (ACT<sup>®</sup> NCRC<sup>®</sup>), an assessment-based credential that certifies foundational work skills important for job success across industries and occupations.
  - **Text Complexity Progress Indicator:** Helps students understand if they are making sufficient progress toward understanding the complex texts they will encounter in college and during their careers

## Links

- [ACT College Readiness Benchmarks](#)
- [ACT Sample Score Report \(Student\)](#)