

Test Preparation and Changes in ACT Scores

How Does Test Preparation Relate to ACT Scores?

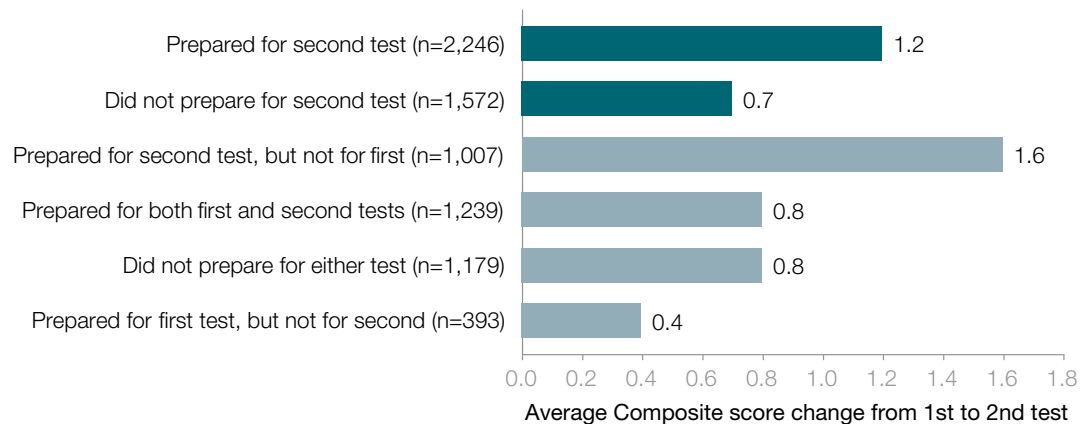
On average, students who reported preparing for the second test earned Composite scores about 1.2 points higher than their scores on the first test. These scores were about one-half point higher than the scores of students who reported not preparing.

To investigate whether test preparation is related to changes in ACT Composite scores, we asked students who took the ACT twice whether they had participated in any test preparation activities or used any test preparation materials (outside of normal classroom participation) prior to testing.¹ Then, we compared the students' ACT Composite scores from both testing occasions.

For most students, score changes were positive but relatively small. On average, students who reported preparing for the second test earned Composite scores about 1.2 points higher than their scores on the first test. Moreover, the Composite scores of these students were about one-half point higher than the scores of those who reported not preparing (average change of 1.2 vs. 0.7 Composite score points, respectively).

A closer look at preparation patterns reveals that students who reported preparing only for the second test earned Composite scores that were about 0.8 points higher, on average, than those of students who reported preparing for both tests or for neither test. Noticeably smaller average score differences were observed for students who reported preparing for the first test, but not for the second.

Score Changes of Students Who Took the ACT on Two Occasions



Note: Data are from 3,818 students who took the ACT twice, either for the first time in fall 2007 and for the second time in spring 2008, or for the first time in spring 2008 and for the second time in fall 2008. The students also completed a survey pertaining to test preparation activities.

¹ When asking this particular question, we did not refer to specific types of preparation activity, such as Web-based preparation programs, commercial preparation programs, preparation workbooks, etc. We simply asked "Did you participate in any specific test preparation activity(ies) or use any test preparation materials, outside of normal classroom participation, prior to taking the ACT on each of the specified dates?"

infobrief@act.org for more information or to suggest ideas for future ACT Information Briefs.