

## ACT Research and Policy

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# Test Preparation and Changes in ACT Scores

How Do Particular Outcomes of Preparation Relate to ACT Scores?

## Information Brief

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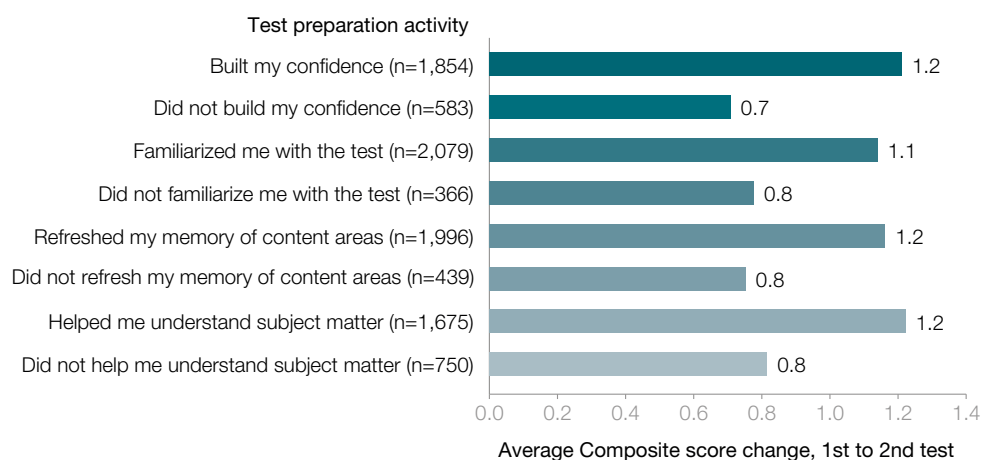
Students had larger score changes from a first to a second test when they reported that test preparation:

- increased their confidence,
- increased their familiarity with the test,
- refreshed their memory of content, or
- improved their understanding of subject matter.

We know from ACT's research that test preparation is modestly related to positive changes in ACT scores<sup>1</sup>. How do particular outcomes of preparation, such as experiencing increased confidence or becoming familiar with the format of the test, relate to the scores?

- Students who believed that their preparation activity built their confidence for the second test earned ACT Composite scores about 1.2 points higher, on average, than on the first test. Students who did not have this belief experienced smaller score changes (0.7 points, on average).
- Students who reported that their test preparation activity for the second test familiarized them with the test so that they knew what to expect had larger average Composite score changes (1.1 points) than did students who did not (0.8 points).
- Students who reported that their test preparation activity for the second test refreshed their memory of the content areas outperformed those who did not (average Composite score change of 1.2 vs. 0.8 points, respectively).
- Students who believed that their preparation activity for the second test helped them better understand particular subject matter experienced larger score changes than those who did not have this belief (average score change of 1.2 vs. 0.8 points, respectively).

## 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.

<sup>1</sup> Students who reported preparing for a second ACT test earned Composite scores on that test that were about 1.2 points higher, on average, than their scores on the first test (see Test Preparation and Changes in ACT Scores, Part 1). In addition, the more time students spent preparing, the higher the average Composite score change from the first to the second test (see Test Preparation and Changes in ACT Scores, Part 2).

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