

Initial Evidence in Support of Section Retakes: The Impact of Administering the ACT Subject Tests in Different Orders on ACT Scores

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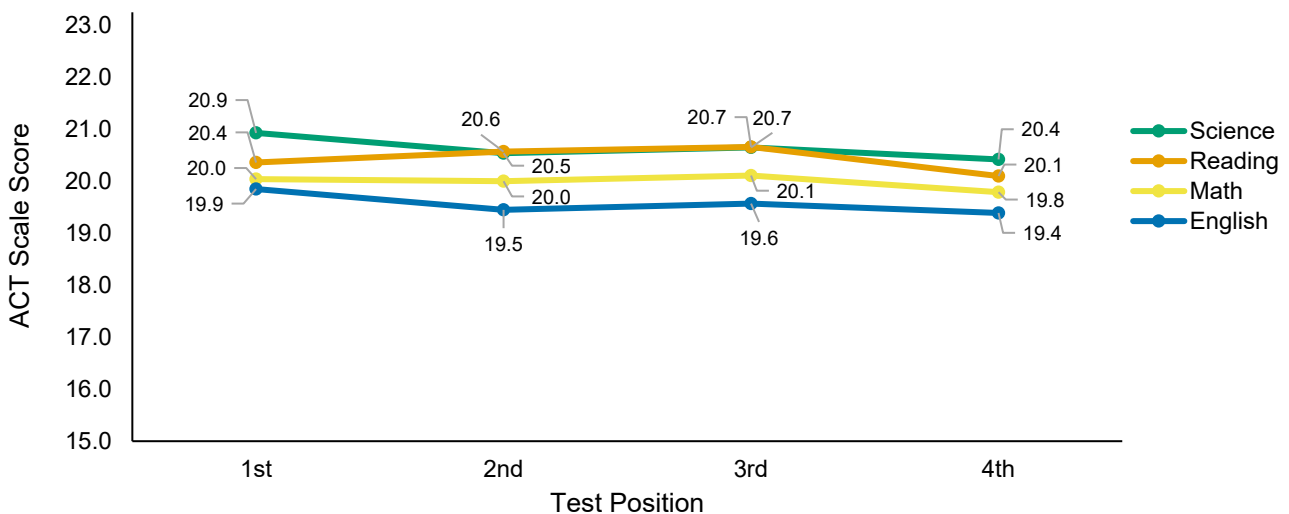
To evaluate whether ACT® subject scores are comparable when sections are completed individually as compared to administering the entire ACT test, we conducted a study in 2016 investigating the impact of administering the ACT subject tests in different orders on ACT scores. When a particular subject test is taken in the first position, it could be considered comparable to a situation where that test is taken modularly.

For this study, over 4,000 students were randomly assigned to one of four order conditions:

- English, math, reading, science (standard order)
- Math, science, English, reading (non-standard order; math first)
- Reading, English, science, math (non-standard order; reading first)
- Science, reading, math, English (non-standard order; science first)

The results indicated that students earn similar ACT subject test scores when taking a test section first rather than the typical test position (e.g., reading first versus third), as shown in Figure 1. The average ACT subject scores (English, math, reading, science) by order (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th) are plotted. The lines are relatively flat, indicating that there was not substantial variability in the average scores when the tests were taken in different positions. The full research report is forthcoming.

Figure 1. Average ACT Subject Scores by Test Position



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