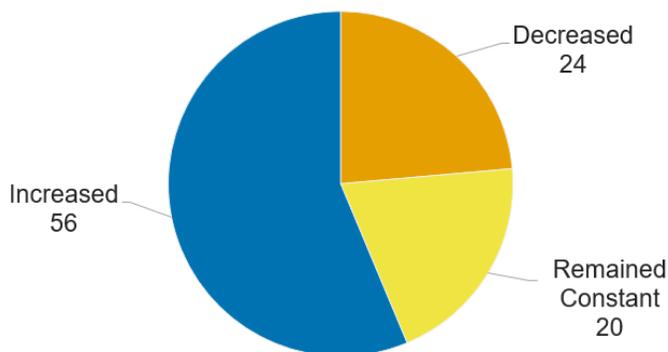


# Should Students Take the ACT Again?

Matt Harmston, MA

Out of over 1.9 million students in the 2018 ACT-tested graduating class, 44% took the full ACT® test at least twice. In most cases, retesting reflected a pursuit of higher ACT Composite scores. As illustrated in Figure 1, 56% of these retesters saw an increase of one or more ACT Composite score points upon second testing, compared to 20% who remained constant and 24% who saw their score go down. This report introduces readers both to impacts of taking the ACT test a second time and to an ACT-created web application designed to estimate students' chances of potential score gains, available [here](#). This information can help students, counselors, and educators decide whether or not students should retest with the ACT.

**Figure 1.** Retest Composite Score Gain Percents for All Multi-Testing 2018 ACT-Tested Graduates



While the percents in Figure 1 provide helpful data points, they include general patterns about all students that overlook important variations in these outcomes. For instance, ACT Composite scores will increase in accordance with more time in the classroom.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, students taking more rigorous courses typically demonstrate greater gains. These examples, among others, highlight a need for a more finely-tuned, student-specific tool for estimating ACT Composite score gains between their first and second test.

In light of this need, ACT has developed the aforementioned web application that enables users to calculate the likelihood of Composite score gains by student-specific criteria. The application calculates and presents probabilities of ACT Composite score gain levels tailored to seven student characteristics, among

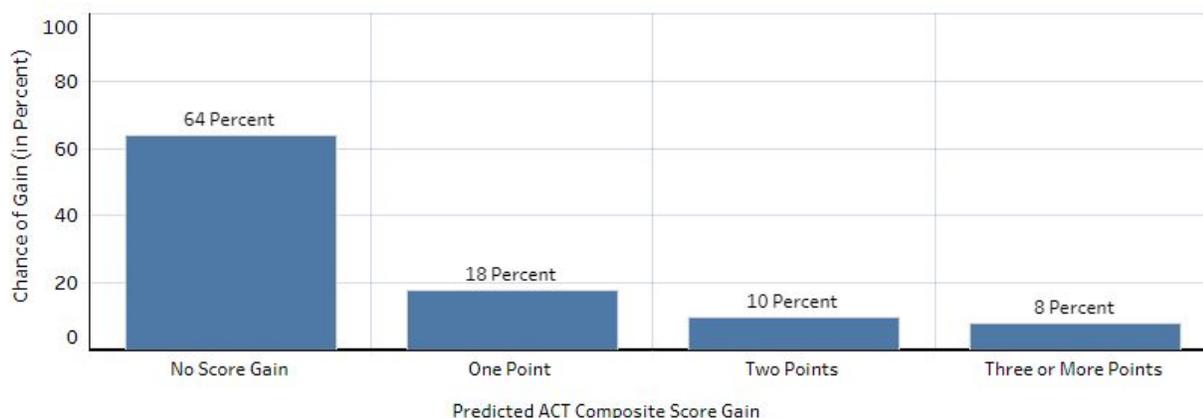


[ACT.org/research](https://act.org/research)

them first ACT Composite score, high school GPA, and time between first and second test. The example bar graph in Figure 2 uses default student characteristics supplied for the web application.

By accessing the application, user-supplied information can tailor predictions specifically to the student, thus adding to information used in the decision of whether to test a second time. It is helpful to note that use of free test preparation tools, such as [ACT Academy](#), can increase student gains, exceeding those presented by the application.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 2.** Example of Predicted Composite Score Gain



While estimates from the prediction application support decision making regarding taking the full ACT test, coming years will see enhancements that incorporate additional predictors and the opportunity to retake on single ACT section tests.<sup>3</sup> For more details regarding the application, [see this brief](#).

## Notes

1. Camara, W., & Allen, J. (2017). *Does testing date impact student scores on the ACT?* Iowa City, IA: ACT.
2. Payne, J. S., & Allen, J. (2019) *An early look at ACT Academy usage and effectiveness*. Iowa City, IA: ACT.
3. Beginning in September of 2020, students who complete the full ACT will have an opportunity to retake on any one or more subtests on the ACT.

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