

10 Practical Steps to Approach the ACT® with Confidence

Small Changes Lead to More Points

You don't need to be perfect on test day. You just need to know how to manage your time and answer strategically—and that starts with practicing the right way.

1. Answer Every Question

There's no penalty for wrong answers on the ACT, so don't leave anything blank. A guess gives you a chance. A blank gives you none.

2. Know When to Move On

Not every question deserves the same amount of time. If you're stuck, mark it, move on, and come back if time allows.

3. Practice Your Pacing

The ACT moves quickly. Learn what your pace should feel like so one tough question doesn't cost you easier points later.

4. Build Test-Day Stamina

The ACT takes mental endurance. Practice full sections without checking your phone, getting distracted, or taking shortcuts.

5. Pick a Letter of the Day

For questions where you truly have no idea, choose one (A, B, C, or D), and stick with it for blind guesses. This gives you a better chance to gain points than scrambling randomly.

6. Set a Goal Score

"Do my best" is not a strategy. Look at the score ranges for colleges you're interested in and set a target that gives your prep a clear purpose.

7. Remember: You Can Improve

The ACT is predictable and coachable. With a plan, practice, and the right resources, you can learn the patterns and get better.

8. Focus on Your Biggest Growth Area

Don't try to fix everything at once. Start with the section where targeted practice can make the biggest difference.

9. Understand Your Score Options

You can control which ACT score colleges see, so one bad test doesn't define you. Many colleges also superscore, combining your highest sections from different dates into one Composite score that you can send in using the ACT's official Superscore report.

10. Use Real ACT Questions

The more your practice looks like the real test, the more prepared you'll feel on test day. Use official ACT questions whenever you can.

Scan this code to start preparing for the ACT.

Curious about the test? Learn more at [ACT.org](https://act.org).

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ACT[®] English Tips

Making Sense of the Sentence

Use context, grammar, and concise wording to find the best answer.

Read Beyond the Underlined Section

The right answer depends on the full sentence, not just one small piece of it. Some answers even depend on the whole paragraph or essay. Always use context.

Watch for Transitions

Words like “however” and “therefore” must match the relationship between ideas.

Cut Unnecessary Words

If two answers mean the same thing, the shorter one is usually correct.

Choose the Most Direct Answer

Pick the option that’s direct, grammatically correct, and true to the sentence.

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ACT[®] Math Tips

Slow Down to Save Time

A strong setup will help you solve problems faster and stay on track.

Set Up Before Solving

Write the equation or organize the information first. A clean setup prevents mistakes.

Estimate Your Answer

Before solving, predict what the answer should roughly be. This helps catch errors.

Get Comfortable with Your Calculator

The Desmos calculator can save time on test day, but only if you practice with it ahead of time. You can also use your own approved calculator.

Know When to Move On

Don't let one hard problem steal time from easier points later in the section.

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ACT[®] Reading Tips

The Proof Is in the Passage

If you can't find it in the passage, it's probably not the answer.

Find the Main Idea First

Before focusing on details, understand what the passage is mostly about.

Use Evidence from the Text

The best answer is supported by what you actually read, not what feels true.

Pay Attention to Tone

Notice whether the author sounds serious, skeptical, excited, or neutral.

Trust the Supported Answer

If an answer is clearly backed by the passage, don't talk yourself out of it.

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ACT[®] Science Tips

Let the Data Lead the Way

Don't worry if the topic feels unfamiliar.
The clues you need are right in front of you.

Start with the Visuals

Review graphs, charts, and tables before reading anything else.

Look for Trends

What's increasing, decreasing, staying the same, or changing direction?

Compare Carefully

Many questions ask how two results, experiments, or viewpoints differ.

Use the Information Provided

Most questions can be answered using the passages and data and do not require outside knowledge.

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