

OFFICIAL COURSE STUDY GUIDE

ACT Complete Prep

Strategies, timing systems, and content review for every section of the ACT.

TEST PREP · ALL LEVELS · 6 MODULES · 4 HR 15 MIN

Course by SupertutorTV · Curated and published by MegaCourse

MEGACOURSE.APP

ACT Complete Prep: The Complete Study Guide

2026 Edition

Published by MegaCourse · megacourse.app

Learn Anything. Achieve Everything.

MegaCourse curates the world's best free courses into structured learning paths with study guides, practice material, and certificates. This guide accompanies the MegaCourse course "ACT Complete Prep", taught by SupertutorTV. It is designed to be read alongside the video lessons and to serve as a standalone reference for review.

Study guide text copyright © 2026 MegaCourse. Course video content remains the property of its creators. You may print this guide for personal study. Redistribution or resale is not permitted.

Enroll, track progress, and earn your certificate at
megacourse.app/courses/act-complete-prep

Contents

<i>About This Course</i>	<i>4</i>
CHAPTER 1 Introduction to the ACT	6
CHAPTER 2 Module 2: Section 2	11
CHAPTER 3 Mastering ACT Science and Math Essentials	17
CHAPTER 4 Advanced Strategies for ACT Success	22
CHAPTER 5 ACT Game Plan: Format, Pacing, and Practice	28
CHAPTER 6 Final Assessment: ACT Strategy	33
<i>Glossary</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Answer Key</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Where to Go Next</i>	<i>43</i>

INTRODUCTION

About This Course

This study guide accompanies the MegaCourse ACT Complete Prep course. It provides essential strategies, timing systems, and content review for every section of the ACT exam. The ACT is a critical component of college admissions, and mastering its unique challenges, particularly its tight timing, is key to achieving your target score.

This course is taught by SupertutorTV, a recognized expert in test preparation. MegaCourse has enhanced the original video series by adding a clear learning path, supplementary reading, resource lessons, and a final knowledge-check quiz. This structure ensures a comprehensive and effective learning experience.

Our approach focuses on practical application. You will learn specific strategies for English, Math, Reading, and Science, along with effective pacing systems. The goal is to equip you with the tools to approach the ACT confidently and perform at your best.

Course Facts

FORMAT	6 modules · 33 lessons
VIDEO INSTRUCTION	About 4 hr 15 min
LEVEL	All Levels
CATEGORY	Test Prep
INSTRUCTOR	SupertutorTV
CERTIFICATE	Included with course completion on MegaCourse
COURSE HOME	megacourse.app/courses/act-complete-prep

What You Will Learn

- Master pacing systems for the ACT's famously tight timing.
- Apply targeted strategies for English, Math, Reading, and Science.
- Decide intelligently whether and when to take the optional Science section.
- Build a study calendar that peaks on test day.

Who This Course Is For

This course serves any student preparing for the ACT. Whether you are beginning your test preparation or seeking to refine existing skills, the material covers fundamental concepts and advanced strategies. It is

designed for all levels of learners.

To get the most from this course, you should have a basic understanding of algebra and geometry fundamentals. You must also be willing to practice under strict timing conditions, as this is crucial for ACT success.

Before You Start

- Algebra and geometry fundamentals.
- Willingness to practice under strict timing.

How to Use This Guide

The ACT Complete Prep course is organized into 6 modules and 33 lessons, totaling approximately 4 hours and 15 minutes of video instruction. This guide complements the video lessons. We recommend watching each video lesson first, then using this guide for detailed explanations, examples, and practice exercises.

Pace yourself through the modules. The course structure is designed to build your skills progressively. Module 1 focuses on Section 1, Module 2 on Section 2, and so on. Module 5, "ACT Game Plan," helps you integrate all strategies, while Module 6 provides a final assessment.

- Watch video lessons sequentially.
- Review corresponding sections in this guide.
- Complete all practice exercises.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the ACT

Welcome to Chapter 1 of your ACT Complete Prep study guide. This chapter provides a foundational understanding of the ACT, including its structure, scoring, and overall strategies for success. You will learn how the ACT differs from the SAT and discover key insights for approaching each section of the test.

Mastering the ACT begins with knowing the test inside and out. This chapter lays the groundwork, offering essential tips from experienced tutors to help you start your preparation effectively. We will cover general strategies for aiming for a top score, specific advice for English, Math, Reading, and Science, and an overview of the optional ACT essay.

Understanding the ACT: Structure, Scoring, and Overall Strategies

Covers: How to Get a Perfect Score on the ACT® Test: 10 WAYS to get a 36! Tips, Tricks & Strategies! · ACT® vs. The NEW 2016 SAT®: Advice from a Perfect Scorer / Which Should You Take · The New ACT®: Changes You Should Know About!

The ACT is a standardized test used for college admissions in the United States. It consists of four required multiple-choice sections: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science. There is also an optional Writing Test, or essay. Your performance on the four multiple-choice sections determines your Composite Score, which ranges from 1 to 36. Each section also receives a score from 1 to 36.

To achieve a perfect score of 36, you need a near-perfect performance across all sections. This requires a combination of content mastery, strategic timing, and careful execution. Here are ten crucial ways to approach this goal:

1. **Know the Test Inside and Out:** Understand the format, question types, and scoring for every section. Familiarity reduces anxiety and helps you anticipate challenges.
2. **Master Time Management:** The ACT is known for its tight timing. Practice pacing yourself rigorously. Learn how many seconds or minutes you can allot per question for each section.
3. **Review Core Content:** While the ACT tests reasoning, it also assesses knowledge in grammar, algebra, geometry, and data interpretation. Solidify your understanding of these foundational subjects.
4. **Practice Consistently:** Regular practice with official ACT materials is essential. Simulate test conditions, including timing, to build endurance and confidence.
5. **Analyze Mistakes Thoroughly:** Do not just check answers. Understand *why* you got a question wrong. Was it a content gap, a timing issue, or a careless error? Learn from every mistake.
6. **Develop a Strategic Approach to Each Section:** Each section has unique demands. Tailor your strategy for English grammar, Math problem-solving, Reading comprehension, and Science data analysis.
7. **Answer Every Question:** There is no penalty for guessing on the ACT. If you are running out of time, make an educated guess rather than leaving a question blank.

8. **Avoid Careless Errors:** These are often the difference between a good score and a great one. Double-check calculations, read questions carefully, and review your work if time permits.
9. **Maintain Focus and Stamina:** The ACT is a long test. Practice staying focused for extended periods. Take practice tests in one sitting to build your mental endurance.
10. **Manage Test Day Anxiety:** Arrive prepared, well-rested, and with all necessary materials. A calm mind performs better.

The ACT differs from the SAT in several key ways. The ACT generally tests more direct content knowledge and features a faster pace. The SAT traditionally focuses more on reasoning and provides more time per question. For example, the ACT Science section has no direct equivalent on the SAT. When deciding which test to take, consider your strengths. If you are strong in science and prefer a more straightforward, fast-paced test, the ACT might be a better fit. If you prefer more time per question and enjoy reasoning-based problems, the SAT might suit you. Recent changes to the ACT have primarily focused on the optional essay section, which we will discuss later. The core multiple-choice sections have remained largely consistent in format and content over time.

Foundational Strategies for Each ACT Section

Covers: ACT® READING: #1 SECRET TIP · ACT® MATH: #1 Secret Tip! · ACT® SCIENCE: #1 SECRET TIP · ACT® ENGLISH: #1 SECRET TIP

Each section of the ACT presents its own set of challenges and requires specific strategies for optimal performance. While overall test-taking skills are vital, targeted approaches for English, Math, Reading, and Science can significantly improve your score.

ACT English: The Conciseness Rule

The number one secret tip for ACT English is to **choose the shortest, most grammatically correct answer**. The ACT often tests for conciseness and clarity. If multiple answer choices are grammatically correct, the one that expresses the idea most economically is typically the best. Focus on identifying redundancy, wordiness, and awkward phrasing. Beyond conciseness, master standard English conventions: punctuation (commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes), grammar (subject-verb agreement, pronoun agreement, verb tense), and sentence structure (run-ons, fragments). Practice identifying rhetorical skills questions that ask about the best way to achieve a particular purpose, such as adding or deleting information.

ACT Math: Time Management and Formula Mastery

The number one secret tip for ACT Math is to **manage your time strictly and master essential formulas**. The Math section has 60 questions in 60 minutes, meaning you have only one minute per question on average. The questions generally increase in difficulty. Do not spend too much time on any single problem. If you are stuck, make an educated guess and move on. You can always return to it later if time allows. Crucially, memorize key formulas for algebra (linear equations, quadratics), geometry (area, perimeter, volume, special right triangles), and trigonometry (SOH CAH TOA, basic identities). Your calculator is a tool, not a crutch. Know when to use it and when mental math or algebraic manipulation is faster. Practice working backwards from the answer choices for certain problem types.

ACT Reading: Targeted Reading and Evidence Location

The number one secret tip for ACT Reading is to **prioritize understanding the main idea and locating specific details quickly**. You have four passages and 35 minutes to answer 40 questions. This means less than 9 minutes per passage, including reading time. One effective strategy is to skim the passage first, identifying the main idea of each paragraph and the overall purpose of the text. Then, go to the questions and refer back to the passage to find specific evidence for each answer. Avoid reading every word meticulously unless a question demands it. Pay attention to line references and keywords in the questions to guide your search. Practice identifying different question types, such as main idea, detail, inference, and author's purpose.

ACT Science: Data Interpretation, Not Prior Knowledge

The number one secret tip for ACT Science is to **focus solely on the provided data and interpret charts efficiently**. The Science section is not a test of your scientific knowledge. All the information you need to answer the questions is presented in the passages, graphs, tables, and experimental descriptions. Your task is to interpret data, identify trends, draw conclusions, and evaluate hypotheses. Start by reading the questions first, then quickly scan the passage and figures for the relevant information. Pay close attention to labels, units, and relationships between variables. Practice comparing and contrasting different experiments or viewpoints. Avoid bringing in outside scientific knowledge unless explicitly required, as it can sometimes lead to incorrect answers.

The ACT Optional Essay: Structure and Strategy

Covers: The NEW ACT® Essay vs. The NEW SAT® Essay

The ACT includes an optional Writing Test, commonly referred to as the essay. This section provides 40 minutes to plan and write an essay in response to a prompt. The prompt typically presents a contemporary issue and offers three different perspectives on that issue. Your task is to develop your own perspective on the issue, analyze the relationship between your perspective and at least one of the provided perspectives, and support your ideas with logical reasoning and relevant examples.

Understanding the structure and scoring of the ACT essay is crucial. Essays are scored by two readers, each assigning a score from 1 to 6 across four domains: Ideas and Analysis, Development and Support, Organization, and Language Use. These scores are then combined and converted into a single score from 2 to 12. A strong essay demonstrates a clear, well-supported argument, thoughtful analysis of the given perspectives, and effective organization and language.

Here is a step-by-step strategy for tackling the ACT essay:

1. **Understand the Prompt:** Read the prompt carefully. Identify the core issue and the nuances of each of the three provided perspectives. Do not rush this step.
2. **Formulate Your Own Perspective:** Decide where you stand on the issue. Your perspective does not need to align perfectly with one of the provided ones. You can agree, disagree, or offer a nuanced combination.

3. **Analyze the Provided Perspectives:** Critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each given perspective. Consider how they relate to your own viewpoint. You are expected to analyze at least one, but analyzing two or all three can strengthen your essay.
4. **Outline Your Essay:** Before writing, create a brief outline. A standard structure includes:
 - **Introduction:** Hook, introduce the issue, state your thesis (your perspective), and briefly mention the perspectives you will discuss.
 - **Body Paragraphs (2-3):** Each paragraph should develop a point supporting your perspective. Integrate analysis of the provided perspectives into these paragraphs. For example, you might agree with one perspective, explain why, and then contrast it with another. Use specific examples or logical reasoning to support your claims.
 - **Conclusion:** Summarize your main points, restate your thesis in new words, and offer a final thought or implication.
5. **Write Clearly and Concisely:** Use varied sentence structures and precise vocabulary. Ensure your essay flows logically with clear transitions between paragraphs and ideas. Pay attention to grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While the ACT essay differs from the SAT essay in terms of prompt structure and analytical requirements, the core principles of clear writing, logical argumentation, and effective support remain paramount for both. Focus your preparation on the specific demands of the ACT format.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The ACT consists of four multiple-choice sections (English, Math, Reading, Science) and an optional essay, with scores ranging from 1 to 36.
- Achieving a high ACT score requires consistent practice, strict time management, thorough content review, and careful mistake analysis.
- The ACT generally tests more direct content knowledge and has a faster pace compared to the SAT.
- For ACT English, prioritize conciseness and mastery of standard grammar and punctuation rules.
- For ACT Math, strict time management and memorization of key formulas are essential for success.
- For ACT Reading, focus on quickly grasping main ideas and efficiently locating specific details within passages.
- For ACT Science, interpret provided data, graphs, and tables without relying on outside scientific knowledge.
- The ACT essay requires you to develop your own perspective on an issue, analyze given viewpoints, and support your argument with clear reasoning and examples.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer these before moving on. Model answers are in the Answer Key at the back of this guide.

1. What are the four required sections of the ACT and what is the scoring range for the Composite Score?
2. Why is time management particularly important on the ACT?
3. What is the key strategy for the ACT English section?
4. What kind of knowledge is primarily tested in the ACT Science section?
5. What are the main components of a strong ACT essay?

CHAPTER 2

Module 2: Section 2

Chapter 2 focuses on essential strategies and preparation for the ACT. You will learn key grammar rules and common pitfalls tested in the English section, along with effective mathematical approaches to tackle challenging problems. This chapter also guides you through the structure and demands of the ACT Essay, offering a clear path to developing a strong analytical response.

Beyond section-specific content, you will gain practical advice on organizing your self-study, making the most of last-minute preparation, and ensuring a smooth test day experience. We also discuss how to select the best study materials to support your preparation.

Mastering ACT English Grammar and Style

Covers: Trump vs SAT® Grammar (and ACT® Grammar!!). Learn from Donald's Tweets! · ACT® English QUICK TIP #5: Equivalent Answers

The ACT English section tests your understanding of standard written English, including grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and rhetorical skills. Many common errors found in informal writing, such as social media posts, directly reflect the types of mistakes the ACT targets. By recognizing these patterns, you can improve your score significantly.

One frequent error involves **subject-verb agreement**. A singular subject requires a singular verb, and a plural subject requires a plural verb. For example, in the sentence "The list of items is long," 'list' is the singular subject, not 'items'. The verb must be 'is'. The ACT often places phrases between the subject and verb to confuse you. Always identify the true subject of the sentence. Another common issue is **pronoun agreement**. Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in number and gender. If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun must be singular. For instance, "Each student must bring *their* own book" is technically incorrect in formal English; it should be "Each student must bring *his or her* own book" or, preferably, rewrite to plural: "Students must bring *their* own books." The ACT prefers formal agreement.

Sentence structure is another critical area. You must identify and correct run-on sentences and sentence fragments. A run-on sentence combines two or more independent clauses without proper punctuation or conjunctions. A fragment is an incomplete thought, missing a subject, a verb, or both, or it is a dependent clause presented as a complete sentence. Correcting these often involves using periods, semicolons, or coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

Consider punctuation. **Commas** have several roles: separating items in a list, setting off introductory clauses or phrases, separating independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction, and setting off non-essential information. A common mistake is using a comma to splice two independent clauses together without a coordinating conjunction (a comma splice). **Apostrophes** indicate possession (e.g., 'the student's book') or contractions (e.g., 'it's' for 'it is'). Do not confuse 'its' (possessive) with 'it's' (contraction).

Finally, the ACT English section frequently presents **equivalent answers**. This means multiple answer choices might convey the same basic information, but only one is the most concise, clear, and grammatically sound. The ACT favors brevity and directness. If two options are grammatically correct, the shorter one is often the better choice, provided it does not lose essential meaning. Look for redundancy. For example, if a phrase says "return back," 'back' is redundant because 'return' already implies going back. The best answer would simply be "return." Practice identifying unnecessary words or phrases that add no new information. Always choose the most efficient option that maintains grammatical correctness and the original meaning of the sentence. This strategy alone can help you eliminate several incorrect choices on test day. Focus on precision and economy of language in all your answers.

Effective Strategies for ACT Math

Covers: 5 ACT® Math Hacks!! Best Tips, Tricks, & Strategies to ACE the TEST from a perfect scorer!

The ACT Math section tests a broad range of mathematical concepts, from pre-algebra to trigonometry, under strict time constraints. Success often comes from applying smart strategies rather than just knowing the formulas. Here are five powerful hacks to improve your performance.

1. Plugging in Numbers

When an algebra problem has variables in the answer choices, a powerful strategy is to **plug in your own numbers**. Choose simple values for the variables, solve the problem using those values, and then plug the same values into the answer choices to see which one matches your result. This converts an abstract algebra problem into a concrete arithmetic one. For example, if a problem asks for an expression equivalent to $(x + y)^2$, and the choices are $x^2 + y^2$, $x^2 + 2xy + y^2$, etc., pick $x = 2$ and $y = 3$. Then $(2 + 3)^2 = 5^2 = 25$. Now test the choices. $x^2 + y^2 = 2^2 + 3^2 = 4 + 9 = 13$ (incorrect). $x^2 + 2xy + y^2 = 2^2 + 2(2)(3) + 3^2 = 4 + 12 + 9 = 25$ (correct). This method can simplify complex algebraic manipulations.

2. Working Backwards from Answer Choices

For certain problems, especially those involving specific numerical answers, it can be faster to **work backwards from the answer choices**. Start with the middle answer choice (often B or C) to narrow down the possibilities. Substitute the value into the problem statement and see if it satisfies the conditions. If it is too high or too low, you can eliminate other choices and try again. This is particularly effective for problems that require solving equations or inequalities, or those with multiple steps.

3. Strategic Calculator Use

Your calculator is a tool, not a crutch. Use it **strategically**. Beyond basic arithmetic, you can use it to graph functions, check solutions to equations, or perform matrix operations if your calculator supports them. For instance, if you need to find the intersection point of two lines, you can graph both equations and use the 'intersect' function on your calculator. Do not use it for simple calculations that you can do faster mentally, as this wastes time. Practice using your calculator's advanced features before test day.

4. Drawing Diagrams

Many geometry and word problems become clearer when you **draw a diagram**. Even a rough sketch can help you visualize the information given and identify missing pieces. Label all known values and angles. For example, if a problem describes a ladder leaning against a wall, draw a right triangle and label the height of the wall, the length of the ladder, and the distance from the wall to the base of the ladder. This often reveals the correct formula or theorem to apply, such as the Pythagorean theorem or trigonometric ratios.

5. Understanding Question Types and Common Traps

The ACT Math section reuses certain question formats and common traps. Learn to **recognize these patterns**. For instance, problems involving percentages, ratios, proportions, and averages appear frequently. Be wary of distractors that are correct intermediate steps but not the final answer. Pay close attention to what the question *specifically* asks for. Is it 'x' or '2x'? Is it the area or the perimeter? A quick read of the final sentence of the question can prevent careless errors.

Consistent practice with these strategies will build your confidence and speed, allowing you to approach the ACT Math section with greater efficiency and accuracy.

Mastering the ACT Essay

Covers: The NEW New ACT® Essay: Understanding the Changes to Improve Your Essay Score!

The ACT Essay, an optional but valuable component, assesses your ability to analyze a complex issue, evaluate different perspectives, and articulate your own reasoned argument. Unlike older versions, the current ACT Essay (introduced in 2015) requires a more sophisticated approach than simply stating an opinion. You have 40 minutes to plan and write your essay.

The essay prompt presents a complex issue and three distinct perspectives on that issue. Your task is to:

1. **Analyze and evaluate** the given perspectives.
2. **State and develop your own perspective** on the issue.
3. **Explain the relationship** between your perspective and at least one of the provided perspectives.

To achieve a high score, your essay must demonstrate strong skills in four key areas:

- **Ideas and Analysis:** This score reflects your ability to understand the prompt, analyze the perspectives, and develop a clear, insightful argument. You must go beyond summarizing the provided perspectives; you need to critically evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.
- **Development and Support:** This measures how well you support your claims with relevant evidence, examples, and reasoning. Your arguments should be well-explained and logically connected. You can draw on personal experience, historical events, current events, or hypothetical scenarios.
- **Organization:** A well-organized essay has a clear introduction, body paragraphs with distinct points, and a strong conclusion. Use transitions to create a smooth flow between ideas and paragraphs. Each

body paragraph should focus on a specific aspect of your argument or an analysis of a given perspective.

- **Language Use:** This assesses your command of standard written English, including vocabulary, sentence structure variety, and grammar. Aim for clear, precise language and avoid informal expressions. Proofread carefully for errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Here is a step-by-step approach to writing your ACT Essay:

1. **Deconstruct the Prompt (5-7 minutes):** Read the prompt and all three perspectives carefully. Identify the core issue. Understand the nuances of each perspective. Note any points of agreement or disagreement between them. Brainstorm your own initial thoughts on the issue.
2. **Develop Your Thesis and Outline (10-12 minutes):** Decide on your own perspective. It does not have to align perfectly with one of the provided perspectives; you can synthesize elements or offer a new viewpoint. Craft a clear thesis statement that articulates your stance and hints at your main supporting points. Create a brief outline for your essay. Decide which perspectives you will analyze and how they relate to your own. A common structure is: Introduction (thesis), Body Paragraph 1 (analysis of Perspective 1 and its relation to your view), Body Paragraph 2 (analysis of Perspective 2 and its relation to your view), Body Paragraph 3 (further development of your own perspective with additional support), Conclusion.
3. **Write the Essay (20-25 minutes):** Follow your outline. Start with a strong introduction that hooks the reader and presents your thesis. Develop each body paragraph with specific examples and logical reasoning. Ensure smooth transitions between paragraphs. Analyze the provided perspectives, explaining how they support, contradict, or complicate your own argument. Do not just summarize; evaluate. Use sophisticated vocabulary and varied sentence structures. Maintain a formal and academic tone.
4. **Proofread (2-3 minutes):** Quickly review your essay for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and clarity. Check for any awkward phrasing or repetitive words. Ensure your arguments are coherent and your conclusion effectively summarizes your main points without introducing new information.

Practice writing essays under timed conditions to become comfortable with this process. Focus on developing a nuanced argument that engages with the complexity of the issue, rather than presenting a simplistic opinion.

Comprehensive ACT Study and Test Day Preparation

Covers: How to Self Study for The ACT® · How to CRAM for the ACT® Test: Last Minute Tips from a Perfect Scorer! · What to Pack for The ACT®: Items to Bring to Guarantee A Smooth Test Day · ACT® Book Review: The BEST ACT® Prep Books For Your Perfect Score Prep!

Effective preparation for the ACT requires a structured approach, whether you have months or just days before the test. A well-designed study plan, combined with smart last-minute tactics and proper test day logistics, can significantly boost your performance.

How to Self-Study for the ACT

Self-study is highly effective when approached systematically. Begin with a **diagnostic test** using official ACT materials. This identifies your strengths and weaknesses across all sections. Analyze your results thoroughly, noting question types you missed and why. Next, **focus your practice**. Allocate more time to your weakest areas. Use targeted drills for specific concepts (e.g., algebra, punctuation rules, reading comprehension strategies). Integrate **regular full-length practice tests** into your schedule, mimicking actual test conditions as closely as possible. This builds stamina and helps you manage timing. After each practice test, review every question, especially those you answered incorrectly or guessed on. Understand the correct answer and why your choice was wrong. Maintain a **mistake log** to track recurring errors. Finally, **build a study calendar** that allows for consistent, manageable study sessions and peaks your readiness on test day, avoiding burnout.

Last-Minute Tips for Cramming

If test day is rapidly approaching, focus on high-impact activities. Do not try to learn entirely new material in the final days. Instead, **review key formulas and concepts** that you frequently forget. Practice a few sets of questions under timed conditions, but avoid taking a full-length practice test within 48 hours of the actual exam, as this can cause fatigue. Prioritize **rest and mental preparation**. Get adequate sleep in the nights leading up to the test. Engage in light, enjoyable activities to reduce stress. Visualize yourself performing well. A calm mind is crucial for optimal performance.

What to Pack for Test Day

Being prepared logistically can alleviate anxiety and ensure a smooth test experience. Here is a checklist of essential items:

- **ACT Admission Ticket:** Printed clearly, with your photo attached if required.
- **Valid Photo Identification:** A government-issued ID (driver's license, passport) or school ID.
- **No. 2 Pencils with Good Erasers:** Bring several, sharpened. Mechanical pencils are usually allowed but have spare lead.
- **Approved Calculator:** Check the ACT website for specific calculator policies. Make sure it has fresh batteries or bring spares.
- **Watch:** Analog or digital with no alarm functions. Do not rely on the test center clock.
- **Snacks and Water:** For breaks outside the testing room. Keep them easily accessible.
- **Jacket or Sweatshirt:** Test rooms can be unpredictable in temperature.
- **Small Bag or Backpack:** To carry your items. You will likely store it under your desk.

Leave prohibited items at home, including cell phones (they must be off and put away, or ideally, left in your car), smartwatches, headphones, and any unauthorized study materials.

Choosing the Best ACT Prep Books

Selecting the right study materials is vital. Prioritize **official ACT publications** first. These contain real past tests and are the most accurate representation of the exam. Supplement official guides with **comprehensive content review books** that explain concepts in detail, especially in your weaker

areas. Look for books that offer clear explanations for both correct and incorrect answers. **Strategy guides** can provide valuable test-taking techniques and pacing advice. When evaluating books, consider the publication date (to ensure it reflects the current test format), the reputation of the publisher, and reviews from other students. A good prep book should offer a balance of content review, strategy, and ample practice questions with thorough explanations.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Mastering ACT English requires understanding common grammar rules like subject-verb agreement, pronoun agreement, and proper sentence structure.
- The ACT English section often tests for redundancy; choose the most concise and grammatically correct answer.
- Strategic math hacks like plugging in numbers, working backwards, and drawing diagrams can significantly improve efficiency and accuracy on the ACT Math section.
- The ACT Essay requires analysis of multiple perspectives, development of your own viewpoint, and explanation of the relationship between them.
- A structured self-study plan begins with a diagnostic test, focuses on weak areas, and incorporates regular full-length practice tests.
- Last-minute ACT preparation should focus on reviewing key concepts and getting adequate rest, not learning new material.
- Pack essential items like your admission ticket, photo ID, No. 2 pencils, an approved calculator, and a watch for a smooth test day experience.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer these before moving on. Model answers are in the Answer Key at the back of this guide.

1. What is the primary goal when encountering 'equivalent answers' on the ACT English section?
2. Describe one effective math hack for problems with variables in the answer choices.
3. What are the four main scoring criteria for the ACT Essay?
4. Why is taking a diagnostic test important when beginning ACT self-study?
5. List three essential items you should pack for ACT test day.

CHAPTER 3

Mastering ACT Science and Math Essentials

This chapter provides essential strategies and content review for two critical sections of the ACT: Science and Math. It covers effective approaches to interpreting scientific data, managing the tight timing of the Science section, and tackling challenging Math problems with key formulas.

Beyond specific section strategies, this chapter also addresses broader test preparation habits. You will learn to identify and correct common study mistakes, understand what constitutes a 'good' ACT or PSAT score, and stay informed about potential changes to the ACT. The goal is to equip you with the knowledge and techniques to maximize your performance.

Conquering the ACT Science Section

Covers: ACT® Science Strategies: 3 Ways You Can Hack the Science Section (video, 9 min) · ACT® Science Timing Tip: Drill baby, DRILL!!! (video, 7 min)

The ACT Science section is often misunderstood. Many students believe it tests advanced scientific knowledge, but its true focus is on your ability to interpret data, evaluate experiments, and understand scientific arguments. This section contains 7 passages followed by 40 multiple-choice questions, to be completed in 35 minutes. This tight timing makes efficient strategy crucial.

There are three main types of passages you will encounter:

- **Data Representation Passages**

These passages present scientific information primarily through graphs, tables, and charts. Your task is to extract specific data points, identify trends, and make predictions based on the visual information. Focus on understanding the labels, units, and relationships between variables.

- **Research Summaries Passages**

These describe one or more experiments. You need to understand the experimental design, identify the independent and dependent variables, and analyze the results. Pay attention to the purpose of each experiment, the methods used, and the conclusions drawn.

- **Conflicting Viewpoints Passages**

These passages present two or more differing hypotheses or theories on a scientific phenomenon. Your goal is to understand each viewpoint, identify points of agreement and disagreement, and evaluate the evidence supporting each perspective. Treat these like a mini-Reading comprehension passage.

To effectively "hack" the Science section, consider these strategies:

1. **Read the Questions First:** Before reading the passage in detail, skim the questions. This helps you identify what specific information you need to look for. You may find some questions only require you

to locate a single data point.

2. **Focus on Data and Trends:** For Data Representation and Research Summaries, spend less time reading the introductory text and more time analyzing the figures. Look for patterns, relationships, and anomalies in the data. What happens to variable Y as variable X increases? Is there an inverse or direct relationship?
3. **Identify Key Variables and Controls:** In Research Summaries, quickly pinpoint what is being changed (independent variable) and what is being measured (dependent variable). Understand any constants or controls in the experiment.

Timing is your biggest challenge. The "Drill baby, DRILL!!!" approach emphasizes consistent, timed practice. Start by practicing individual passages under strict time limits. For example, give yourself 5 minutes per passage. As you improve, combine passages and eventually complete full sections. This builds speed and stamina. Do not just take practice tests; dissect your mistakes. Understand *why* you got a question wrong, not just *what* the correct answer is. Was it a misinterpretation of data, a careless error, or a timing issue? Targeted practice with feedback is the most effective way to improve your Science score.

Essential Strategies for ACT Math

Covers: The HARDEST ACT® Math Problems (video, 12 min) · Must-Know Formulas for ACT® Math - Tips, Tricks, & Hacks for the Math section of the ACT® (video, 9 min)

The ACT Math section consists of 60 questions to be completed in 60 minutes. Questions generally increase in difficulty, starting with basic algebra and progressing to more advanced topics. To excel, you need a strong grasp of fundamental concepts, efficient problem-solving strategies, and a command of essential formulas.

The "hardest" ACT Math problems often involve concepts from advanced algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. These might include:

- **Complex Numbers:** Operations with i (where $i^2 = -1$).
- **Matrices:** Basic matrix operations like addition, subtraction, and scalar multiplication.
- **Logarithms:** Understanding log properties and solving logarithmic equations.
- **Conic Sections:** Equations of circles, ellipses, parabolas, and hyperbolas.
- **Trigonometric Identities and Graphs:** Beyond basic SOH CAH TOA, this includes understanding sine, cosine, and tangent graphs, and applying identities such as $\sin^2\theta + \cos^2\theta = 1$.
- **Probability and Statistics:** More complex probability scenarios, combinations, permutations, and statistical inference.

When facing a difficult problem, do not panic. Break it down. Can you simplify the expression? Can you plug in numbers to test the answer choices? Sometimes, drawing a diagram for geometry problems can reveal the solution. Remember that every problem on the ACT is solvable with the math concepts taught in high school.

Mastering "Must-Know Formulas" is non-negotiable. Here are some critical ones:

- **Slope-Intercept Form:** $y = mx + b$ (m is slope, b is y-intercept)
- **Distance Formula:** $d = \sqrt{(x_2 - x_1)^2 + (y_2 - y_1)^2}$
- **Midpoint Formula:** $((x_1 + x_2)/2, (y_1 + y_2)/2)$
- **Quadratic Formula:** $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$ (for $ax^2 + bx + c = 0$)
- **Area of a Triangle:** $A = (1/2)bh$
- **Pythagorean Theorem:** $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ (for right triangles)
- **SOH CAH TOA:** $\sin(\theta) = \text{opposite/hypotenuse}$, $\cos(\theta) = \text{adjacent/hypotenuse}$, $\tan(\theta) = \text{opposite/adjacent}$

Example: Solving a Quadratic Equation

If you encounter $2x^2 + 5x - 3 = 0$, you can use the quadratic formula where $a=2$, $b=5$, $c=-3$.

$$x = \frac{-5 \pm \sqrt{5^2 - 4 * 2 * -3}}{2 * 2} \quad x = \frac{-5 \pm \sqrt{25 + 24}}{4} \quad x = \frac{-5 \pm \sqrt{49}}{4} \quad x = \frac{-5 \pm 7}{4}$$

This gives two solutions: $x = (-5 + 7) / 4 = 2 / 4 = 1/2$ and $x = (-5 - 7) / 4 = -12 / 4 = -3$.

Practice applying these formulas to various problem types to build speed and accuracy.

Smart ACT Prep Habits and Score Insights

Covers: ACT® Test Prep: Why You're Doing it Wrong. 5 Bad Prep Habits (video, 10 min) · What's a Good ACT® Score? (video, 8 min) · What's a Good PSAT® Score? (video, 19 min) · Should You Take the New ACT? Here's What Test Prep Pros Are Saying - 3 Mistakes to Avoid! (video, 8 min)

Effective test preparation extends beyond mastering content; it involves cultivating smart study habits and understanding the scoring system. Many students fall into common pitfalls that hinder their progress. Avoiding these "5 Bad Prep Habits" can significantly improve your outcomes:

1. **Only Taking Practice Tests:** While practice tests are vital, simply taking them without thorough review is ineffective. You must analyze every incorrect answer to understand the mistake and learn from it.
2. **Ignoring Timing:** The ACT is a timed test. Practicing without a timer or not adhering to strict section limits will not prepare you for the real exam's pressure. Integrate timing into all your practice sessions.
3. **Inconsistent Study Schedule:** Cramming the night before is rarely successful. A consistent, structured study plan over several weeks or months is far more effective for long-term retention and skill development.
4. **Not Reviewing Mistakes:** This is perhaps the most critical mistake. Every incorrect answer is a learning opportunity. Categorize your errors (content gap, careless error, timing issue) and target those weaknesses.
5. **Procrastinating:** Delaying your prep leads to rushed, inefficient study. Start early to allow ample time for learning, practice, and review.

Understanding "What's a Good ACT Score?" depends heavily on your personal goals and target colleges. A "good" score is subjective, but generally, scores are evaluated against national percentiles. For example, a composite score of 20 places you around the 50th percentile, meaning you scored better than 50 percent of test-takers. A score of 24 is roughly the 75th percentile, and a 28 is around the 90th percentile.

Research the average ACT scores of admitted students at your desired colleges to set a realistic target.

Similarly, "What's a Good PSAT Score?" is often tied to the National Merit Scholarship Program. The PSAT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) is primarily used to identify National Merit Scholars. Scores are interpreted differently than the ACT/SAT. A Selection Index score (derived from your PSAT section scores) above a certain threshold, which varies by state, can qualify you for recognition. While the PSAT is not the ACT, understanding its scoring helps in familiarizing yourself with standardized test score interpretation and percentile ranks, which apply across different exams.

Finally, staying informed about potential changes to the exam is crucial. The question of "Should You Take the New ACT?" refers to discussions about potential digital formats or section retesting options. Three mistakes to avoid are:

1. **Assuming No Changes:** Always check the official ACT website for the latest information on test format and administration.
2. **Relying on Outdated Strategies:** If the test format changes, old strategies might become less effective. Adapt your approach based on current information.
3. **Ignoring Practice for New Formats:** If a digital ACT becomes widely available, practice with digital tools and interfaces to build comfort and familiarity. Always be prepared for what is current.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The ACT Science section primarily tests data interpretation and experimental analysis, not deep scientific knowledge.
- Effective timing and consistent, timed practice are essential for success in the ACT Science section.
- Mastering key formulas and strategic problem-solving approaches is critical for the ACT Math section.
- Avoiding common bad study habits, such as neglecting mistake review and inconsistent practice, significantly improves ACT scores.
- A 'good' ACT or PSAT score is relative to individual goals and college admissions requirements, often understood through percentile ranks.
- Staying informed about any potential changes to the ACT format is a vital part of comprehensive test preparation.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer these before moving on. Model answers are in the Answer Key at the back of this guide.

1. What are the three main types of passages found in the ACT Science section, and what is the primary skill tested across all of them?
2. Describe one effective timing strategy for the ACT Science section, as suggested by the 'Drill baby, DRILL!!!' approach.
3. Name two essential math formulas for the ACT and explain when they are typically used.
4. Identify two common bad study habits for the ACT and suggest how to correct them.
5. How can a student determine if their ACT score is 'good' for their personal goals and college aspirations?

CHAPTER 4

Advanced Strategies for ACT Success

This chapter focuses on refining your ACT preparation. It moves beyond basic content review to discuss strategic considerations. You will learn about optimal timing for taking the ACT, advanced tactics for achieving top scores, and essential general tips applicable to all sections.

We will also address common questions about the ACT Science section and its role in college admissions. Finally, this chapter provides a detailed breakdown of 'modeling questions,' a pervasive question type across the entire ACT, equipping you with specific strategies to tackle them effectively.

Mastering the ACT: Timing, Strategy, and High Scores

Covers: When Is the Best Time to Take the ACT? · How to Get a 36 on the Enhanced ACT · 10 Must Know Tips for the Enhanced ACT!

The ACT is a high-stakes examination, and strategic planning is as vital as content mastery. This includes careful consideration of *when* to take the test, adopting a mindset for top scores, and applying universal test-taking strategies.

Optimal Timing for Your ACT Attempts

Deciding when to take the ACT involves balancing academic readiness with college application timelines. Most students take their first official ACT during their junior year of high school. This timing allows them to complete foundational courses like Algebra II and Geometry, which are crucial for the Math section. Taking the test in the fall of junior year provides an initial score and allows for a retake in the spring if needed. This also provides scores well in advance of senior year college application deadlines. Some highly prepared students may consider taking the ACT in their sophomore year, but only if core math content is already covered.

Students often benefit from taking the ACT two to three times. Each attempt provides familiarity with the testing environment and helps identify areas for improvement. Data suggests that scores often improve slightly on subsequent attempts. However, taking the test more than four or five times typically yields diminishing returns and can lead to test fatigue. Your goal is to peak your preparation on test day, not to repeatedly take the test hoping for a lucky score. Create a study calendar that builds up to your chosen test dates, allowing for consistent practice and review.

Strategies for High Scores and Test Day Success

Achieving a perfect 36 on the ACT is an ambitious but attainable goal for dedicated students. It demands more than just knowing the content; it requires near-perfect accuracy across all sections and a deep understanding of the test's structure and common traps. A 36 means you have answered almost every question correctly, often allowing for only one or two errors in total across the entire test.

To reach this level, and to maximize your score generally, implement these key strategies:

1. **Master Pacing Systems:** Every second counts. Develop an internal clock for each section. For instance, you have about 36 seconds per English question, one minute per Math question, and roughly 52 seconds per question in Reading and Science. Practice moving quickly and efficiently without sacrificing accuracy. Use a "triage" strategy: attempt easy questions first, mark harder ones, and return if time permits.
2. **Analyze Every Mistake Thoroughly:** Do not just note a wrong answer. Understand *why* it was wrong. Was it a content gap, a misreading of the question, a timing error, or a careless mistake? Categorize your errors to identify patterns and target your study. This is critical for continuous improvement.
3. **Use Official Materials Exclusively:** The most reliable practice comes from official ACT publications. These materials accurately reflect the question types, difficulty, and pacing of the actual test. Avoid unofficial tests that may not be representative.
4. **Answer Every Question:** Always guess if you do not know the answer. There is no penalty for incorrect responses. Make an educated guess if possible, but never leave a bubble blank.
5. **Bubble Strategically:** Decide whether to bubble answers after each question, after each passage, or at the end of a page. Find what works best for your pacing. Avoid bubbling all answers at the very end, which risks running out of time.
6. **Pre-read Questions (Reading and Science):** For these sections, quickly scan the questions before reading the passages or data sets. This helps you identify what information to look for, making your reading more targeted and efficient.
7. **Know Your Content Fundamentals:** For Math, memorize essential geometry formulas, algebraic identities, and trigonometric relationships. For English, review punctuation, sentence structure, subject-verb agreement, and pronoun usage.
8. **Practice Under Timed Conditions:** Take full-length practice tests regularly to build stamina and refine your pacing. This also helps you manage test anxiety.
9. **Prioritize Well-being:** On test day, be well-rested and properly fueled. These factors significantly impact cognitive function and your ability to perform under pressure.

The ACT Science Section: Requirements and Strategy

Covers: ACT Science - Do I need to take it? What Top 50 Colleges Require/Don't Require for the ACT

The ACT Science section often causes confusion among students, particularly regarding its importance for college admissions. It is crucial to clarify a common misconception: the ACT Science section is **not optional**. It is a mandatory component of the ACT, just like English, Math, and Reading. All students taking the ACT must complete the Science section, and their score contributes directly to their overall composite score. The *optional* section on the ACT is the Writing (essay) section.

The Role of Your Science Score in College Admissions

While the Science section is mandatory, its specific weight in college admissions can vary. Most universities primarily focus on your composite ACT score. The composite score is the average of your four section scores (English, Math, Reading, Science), rounded to the nearest whole number. Therefore, a

strong Science score directly boosts your composite score, making it a critical component of your overall application strength.

Some highly selective colleges, or programs with a strong emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, may look more closely at individual section scores. For example, an engineering program might prefer to see a high Math and Science score, even if the Reading score is slightly lower. However, it is rare for a college to have a specific minimum Science score requirement that stands independently of the composite score.

To determine how specific colleges evaluate the Science section, you should:

1. **Check Admissions Websites:** The most accurate information comes directly from the admissions pages of the universities you are interested in. Look for details on how they consider ACT scores, including whether they "superscore" (take the best section scores from multiple tests) or focus on individual section scores.
2. **Consult College Counselors:** Your high school counselor can offer insights into what local or commonly applied-to universities prioritize.

The best approach is always to aim for your highest possible score in all sections, including Science. Do not neglect Science preparation based on assumptions about its importance. A lower Science score will pull down your composite, potentially impacting your admissions chances.

Strategies for the ACT Science Section

The ACT Science section is often misunderstood as a test of scientific knowledge. While some basic scientific literacy is helpful, it is primarily a test of your ability to read, interpret, and analyze scientific data and experiments. It assesses skills such as:

- **Data Representation:** Interpreting information presented in graphs, tables, and charts.
- **Research Summaries:** Understanding the design and results of experiments.
- **Conflicting Viewpoints:** Evaluating different scientific theories or hypotheses.

To excel in Science:

- **Focus on the Data:** The answers are almost always directly stated or inferable from the provided passages, graphs, and tables. Avoid bringing in outside scientific knowledge unless explicitly required.
- **Identify Trends and Relationships:** Look for patterns, correlations, and cause-and-effect relationships within the data.
- **Read Questions First:** As with the Reading section, quickly scanning the questions before getting into the passages can help you target your reading and locate relevant information more efficiently.
- **Practice with Official Tests:** Familiarize yourself with the specific question types and the rapid pace required. Time management is crucial, as you have only 35 minutes for 40 questions across six or seven passages.

Tackling ACT Modeling Questions

Covers: What Are "Modeling" Questions? 4 Tips for Tackling This Question Type That Appears on EVERY ACT!

The ACT frequently includes a question type known as "modeling questions." These questions ask you to interpret, apply, or create a mathematical or scientific model to represent a real-world situation or set of data. They appear across the Math, Science, and sometimes even the Reading sections, making them a pervasive and important skill to master. Modeling questions test your ability to translate between different representations of information, such as written descriptions, equations, graphs, and tables.

What Are Modeling Questions?

A modeling question typically presents a scenario, a set of data, or a description of a relationship, and then asks you to:

- Select the equation or graph that best represents the situation.
- Use a given model to predict an outcome or find a missing value.
- Interpret what different parts of a model (variables, coefficients, intercepts) signify in the context of the problem.
- Compare different models or data sets.

These questions are not always explicitly labeled as "modeling." You will recognize them by their focus on representing real-world phenomena with abstract tools.

4 Tips for Tackling Modeling Questions

Here are four essential tips to approach modeling questions effectively:

1. **Understand the Variables and Units:** Carefully identify what each variable in an equation or on a graph represents. Pay close attention to the units involved (e.g., miles per hour, dollars per item, degrees Celsius). Misinterpreting units is a common source of error. For example, if a variable t represents time in *hours*, ensure your calculations and interpretations align with that unit.
2. **Identify the Relationship or Pattern:** Determine the type of relationship described. Is it linear (constant rate of change), quadratic (parabolic curve), exponential (doubling or halving over time), or inverse? Look for keywords in the problem description like "per," "rate," "proportional to," "doubles every," or "decreases by a factor of." For graphs, observe the shape of the curve.
3. **Test Specific Points or Scenarios:** If you are given a model (equation or graph) and asked if it fits a scenario, or if you need to choose the correct model from several options, test specific, easy-to-calculate points. Plug in values from the problem statement or the answer choices into the model to see if they produce the expected outcome. This is especially useful for eliminating incorrect answer choices.
4. **Look for Key Features (Especially in Graphs):** When dealing with graphs, identify critical features such as intercepts (initial values), slope (rate of change), vertex (maximum or minimum points), and overall shape. Match these features to the problem's description.

Worked Examples

Example 1 (Math Section): A local gym charges a one-time enrollment fee of \$50 and a monthly membership fee of \$30. Which equation models the total cost, C , for m months of membership? A) $C = 50m + 30$ B) $C = 30m + 50$ C) $C = (50 + 30)m$ D) $C = 50 - 30m$

- **Solution:** The enrollment fee is constant, and the monthly fee is a rate. For 1 month, cost = \$50 + \$30 = \$80. For 2 months, cost = \$50 + \$30(2) = \$110. Testing these points in the options, only B) $C = 30m + 50$ consistently works. The 30 is the rate per month, and 50 is the initial fixed cost.

Example 2 (Science Section): A scientist observes the population of a certain bacteria. The population P (in thousands) over time t (in hours) is modeled by the equation $P = 10 \cdot 2^t$. What does the number 10 represent in this model? A) The doubling time of the bacteria. B) The maximum population the bacteria can reach. C) The initial population of the bacteria. D) The rate at which the population decreases.

- **Solution:** This is an exponential growth model. To find the initial population, set $t = 0$. $P = 10 \cdot 2^0 = 10 \cdot 1 = 10$. Therefore, 10 represents the initial population (in thousands). The correct answer is C.

By systematically applying these tips, you can confidently approach and solve modeling questions across all sections of the ACT.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Strategic timing of your ACT attempts can significantly impact your scores and college application process.
- Achieving a top score like a 36 requires consistent near-perfect accuracy and deep test familiarity.
- Effective pacing, strategic guessing, and thorough mistake analysis are crucial for all ACT sections.
- The ACT Science section is mandatory and contributes to your composite score; its importance for college admissions varies by institution.
- "Modeling questions" require translating real-world scenarios into mathematical or graphical representations.
- Understanding variables, identifying relationships, and testing scenarios are key to solving modeling questions.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer these before moving on. Model answers are in the Answer Key at the back of this guide.

1. When is the generally recommended time for students to take their first ACT, and why?
2. What is one key difference between preparing for a good ACT score and preparing for a perfect 36?
3. Describe two essential general tips for approaching any section of the ACT.

4. Is the ACT Science section optional? Explain its significance for college admissions.
5. What is a "modeling question" on the ACT, and what is one core strategy for solving it?

CHAPTER 5

ACT Game Plan: Format, Pacing, and Practice

This chapter equips you with the essential knowledge and strategies to approach the ACT with confidence. We begin by detailing the format and scoring of the enhanced ACT, ensuring you understand the test you are preparing for. Next, we introduce a crucial pacing doctrine designed to help you conquer the ACT's tight timing.

Finally, we guide you through building an effective study plan and using official, free practice materials. Mastering these elements will allow you to maximize your score and minimize test-day surprises.

Understanding the Enhanced ACT

Covers: The Enhanced ACT: Format and Choices

The ACT has evolved, introducing an 'enhanced' version that began rolling out in 2025, initially online and then on paper. Because specific format details can vary by date and mode, always confirm the latest information for your test date directly at act.org. This guide provides a broad overview of the current test structure.

The Core Sections

The ACT consists of four primary sections, three of which form the core composite score:

- **English:** This section assesses your understanding of grammar, punctuation, and rhetorical skills through questions linked to passages. The skills required often overlap with those tested in SAT conventions questions, focusing on sentence boundaries, punctuation pairs, subject-verb agreement, and concision. When faced with uncertainty, remember that the shortest grammatically correct answer is frequently the correct choice.
- **Math:** Covering arithmetic through precalculus, this is a single section where a calculator is permitted. While the content extends slightly further than the SAT (including more trigonometry, logarithms, and matrices), the questions are typically more direct and less reliant on complex reasoning.
- **Reading:** You will encounter passages drawn from literary narrative, social science, humanities, and natural science, presented in a predictable order. As with any modern reading test, all answers must be directly provable from the text provided.
- **Science (Now Optional):** On the enhanced ACT, the Science section is an optional add-on rather than a mandatory part of the core Composite score. This section primarily tests your ability to read charts, tables, and understand experimental design, rather than your memorized scientific facts. It is crucial to check the specific requirements of your target colleges before deciding whether to take this section.

Scoring

Each individual section of the ACT is scored on a scale of 1 to 36. The **Composite score** is the average of your scores on the English, Math, and Reading sections (the core sections). A key planning insight is that because the Composite is an average, gaining one point in your weakest section contributes as much to your overall score as gaining a point in your strongest section. Points in weaker sections are often the 'cheapest' to earn, meaning they require less effort for a significant gain, as there is more room for improvement.

Test Length and Timing

The enhanced ACT has reduced both the number of questions and the total testing time compared to the classic ACT. This change provides slightly more time per question than before. However, timing remains a defining challenge of the test, though it is less brutally strict than in previous versions.

ACT versus SAT

The ACT generally rewards speed, direct problem-solving, and broad content knowledge. In contrast, the SAT emphasizes careful reading and reasoning skills, offering more time per question. To determine which test suits you best, take one official practice test for each. Compare your percentile results and then commit your preparation to a single test. Attempting to prepare for both simultaneously is a common pitfall that often leads to underperformance on both exams.

Mastering ACT Pacing and Practice

Covers: Pacing Doctrine and Study Plan · Your Official (Free) Practice Arsenal

Most points on the ACT are lost due to time constraints, not a lack of knowledge. Therefore, training your pacing skills is as critical as reviewing content. Consider time the ultimate challenge you must overcome.

The Three Pacing Rules

1. **Set Checkpoints, Not a Running Clock:** Instead of constantly watching the clock, divide each section into halves or quarters. Memorize where you should be at each checkpoint. For example, aim to be halfway through the questions when half the time has elapsed. Checking the clock only at these specific intervals prevents both anxious, frequent glances and complete time blindness.
2. **Two-Pass Every Section:** This strategy ensures you secure all easy points first. On your initial pass through a section, answer every question that you can solve quickly, within your per-question time budget. Circle any questions that seem sticky or time-consuming and skip them. On your second pass, return to these circled questions using the time you banked from the first pass. Since every question on the ACT is worth the same single point, harvesting all easy points first is a mathematically unbeatable approach.
3. **Never Leave Blanks:** The ACT does not penalize you for incorrect answers. In the final 30 seconds of each section, if you have any unanswered questions, quickly fill every remaining bubble with your chosen 'letter-of-the-day.' This gives you a chance at earning points for questions you might not have reached.

Section-Specific Pacing Notes

- **English:** The passages themselves are generally fast reads. Most of your time should be allocated to carefully considering the questions. If a list of answer choices consists only of punctuation marks, do not reread the entire paragraph; instead, apply the relevant punctuation rule directly.
- **Math:** The difficulty of math questions generally increases as you progress through the section. Budget your time lightly on the first half of the section to bank extra time for the more challenging questions in the latter part.
- **Reading:** You have the flexibility to choose a passage order that aligns with your strengths. Many students prefer to save prose fiction or the densest passage for last. Practice both reading a passage fully before answering questions and skimming the passage then hunting for answers, to discover which method is faster and more effective for you.
- **Science (if taking):** The passages in the Science section are primarily data displays, not dense textbook excerpts. Go to the questions quickly and refer to the charts and tables only as needed to answer specific questions.

A Six-Week Study Calendar

Here is a structured plan to guide your preparation:

- **Weeks 1-2:** Take one official practice test to diagnose your strengths and weaknesses. Watch the strategy videos in this course for your two weakest sections. Incorporate untimed drills to build foundational skills.
- **Weeks 3-4:** Practice with timed single sections on alternating days. Maintain a detailed miss log, categorizing each incorrect answer by its cause: content gap, time pressure, or misread. The solution for each type of mistake is different.
- **Week 5:** Complete two full timed tests on separate mornings under real test conditions. This builds stamina and familiarity.
- **Week 6:** Engage in light review of your miss log. Take one confidence-building half test. Prioritize rest in the final days, as fatigue is a greater enemy than forgetting.

Your Official (Free) Practice Arsenal

This course does not include copied ACT questions because authentic materials belong to ACT, Inc., and a generous supply of free official resources is available. You should never need to rely on unofficial or bootleg practice material.

Free Official Resources

- **ACT.org Test Prep Hub:** This is the official home for free practice questions, current test-day policies, and the latest format details for your specific administration. This is especially important as the enhanced ACT rolls out across online and paper modes.
- **Official Free Practice Tests:** ACT publishes full-length practice forms with answer keys. Always download the most current versions from the act.org preparation pages, as older forms may not reflect the format and timing changes of the enhanced test.

- **The Official ACT Prep Guide (Paid):** While not free, this guide collects multiple real, retired ACT forms and is considered the gold standard for full dress rehearsals if you require more practice than the free forms offer.

How to Use Official Forms Well

1. **Ration Them:** Official full-length forms are a finite resource. Use one for initial diagnosis, then save the rest for full, timed rehearsals every two to three weeks.
2. **Simulate Honestly:** When taking practice tests, simulate real test conditions as closely as possible. This means completing the test in one sitting, using a printed bubble sheet or the actual online interface, observing timed breaks, and starting in the morning. A test broken into three cozy evening chunks will not accurately measure your performance or stamina.
3. **Score by Section AND by Cause:** Beyond just tallying your score, analyze your results. Understand that Composite score movement often comes from improving your weakest section. Within each section, categorize your misses: was it a content gap (requiring a review of relevant course videos), a timing casualty (requiring an adjustment to your pacing checkpoints), or a misread (requiring you to slow down on question stems, not necessarily on passages)? Identifying the cause directs your study efforts effectively.

Retake Strategy

The ACT is offered many times throughout the year, and superscoring (where colleges combine your best section scores across different test dates) is a widespread policy. Plan for two test dates, spaced approximately 8 to 10 weeks apart from the start of your preparation. Approach the first test with full effort, and use the second test to target whichever section underperformed. Scheduling a retake in advance can also significantly lower test-day anxiety, which itself can be worth valuable points.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The enhanced ACT features four core sections (English, Math, Reading, Science optional), is shorter, and provides slightly more time per question than previous versions.
- The Composite score is the average of English, Math, and Reading; improving your weakest section often provides the most efficient path to higher overall scores.
- Master ACT pacing by using checkpoints, employing a two-pass strategy for questions, and never leaving any answers blank.
- Tailor your pacing to each section: prioritize questions in English, bank time early in Math, choose your Reading passage order, and read Science charts on demand.
- Follow a structured study calendar that incorporates diagnostic tests, targeted drills, full-length simulations, and sufficient rest.
- Utilize only official ACT practice materials and simulate actual test conditions honestly to gain the most accurate feedback.
- Consider planning two ACT test dates, 8 to 10 weeks apart, to use superscoring and reduce test-day anxiety.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer these before moving on. Model answers are in the Answer Key at the back of this guide.

1. What are the four core sections of the enhanced ACT, and which one is now optional?
2. Why is improving your score in a weaker section often more efficient for raising your overall Composite score?
3. Describe the 'Two-Pass Strategy' for managing time on the ACT.
4. What are three key considerations when using official ACT practice tests effectively?
5. Why is it generally recommended to plan for two ACT test dates rather than just one?

CHAPTER 6

Final Assessment: ACT Strategy

Welcome to the final chapter of your ACT Complete Prep study guide. This module culminates your work through the course with a comprehensive assessment of your strategic understanding and application. The Final Assessment is designed to test your mastery of the pacing systems and targeted strategies for all sections of the ACT.

This chapter guides you on how to approach this critical practice material. It covers what you should have mastered, common pitfalls to avoid, and how to interpret your performance. Use this assessment as a powerful tool to identify your strengths and pinpoint any remaining areas for review before test day.

What You Should Have Mastered

Covers: Final Assessment: ACT Strategy (quiz, 5 min)

By this point in the ACT Complete Prep course, you should have a firm grasp of several key areas. You have learned to master pacing systems for the ACT's famously tight timing. This includes knowing how much time to allocate per question and how to move efficiently through each section. You have also applied targeted strategies for English, Math, Reading, and Science. These strategies involve specific approaches to question types, passage analysis, and answer selection.

Also, you should be able to decide intelligently whether and when to take the optional Science section, based on your goals and strengths. Finally, you should understand how to build a study calendar that peaks on test day, ensuring you are prepared and confident. The Final Assessment will challenge you to apply all these skills simultaneously, just as you would on the actual ACT.

Approaching the Final Assessment

Covers: Final Assessment: ACT Strategy (quiz, 5 min)

Treat the Final Assessment quiz as if it were a real section of the ACT. Find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted. Set a timer for the specified duration, which is 5 minutes for this particular quiz. Your goal is not just to answer questions correctly, but to apply the strategies you have learned under timed conditions.

Actively use your pacing system. For example, if the quiz has 10 questions and 5 minutes, aim for 30 seconds per question. Do not get stuck on any single item for too long. If a question is difficult, make your best educated guess based on the strategies you know, mark it, and move on. You can return to marked questions if time permits. Remember to read each question and all answer choices carefully before selecting your response.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Covers: Final Assessment: ACT Strategy (quiz, 5 min)

Students often make several common errors when taking practice assessments. One frequent mistake is rushing through the questions without fully engaging the learned strategies. This can lead to careless errors. Another pitfall is ignoring the time limit or failing to monitor your pacing. Losing track of time can prevent you from completing the quiz.

Do not panic if you encounter a challenging question. Instead, rely on your problem-solving techniques, such as process of elimination. Avoid random guessing without any strategic basis. Finally, a significant mistake is simply looking at the score without analyzing *why* certain questions were missed. This assessment is a learning opportunity, not just a grade.

Interpreting Your Results

Covers: Final Assessment: ACT Strategy (quiz, 5 min)

After completing the Final Assessment, your work is not over. The most valuable part of any practice test is the review process. First, identify which questions you answered correctly and which you missed. Then, for every incorrect answer, determine the reason for the error. Was it a content gap? Did you misread the question? Was it a timing issue? Did you fail to apply a specific strategy?

Categorize your mistakes by ACT section or by question type. This will reveal patterns in your performance. For instance, if you consistently miss questions related to English punctuation, that indicates a specific area for further content review. If you run out of time on Reading passages, you may need to refine your skimming and scanning techniques. Use your results to create a targeted study plan. Revisit specific lessons or modules that address your identified weaknesses. The goal is continuous improvement, not just a score.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Final Assessment tests your ability to apply all ACT strategies under timed conditions.
- Approach the quiz seriously, simulating real test day conditions as closely as possible.
- Actively manage your time and pacing throughout the assessment.
- Analyze every incorrect answer to understand the root cause of the mistake.
- Use your performance data to pinpoint specific areas requiring further study and practice.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer these before moving on. Model answers are in the Answer Key at the back of this guide.

1. What is the primary purpose of the Final Assessment in this course?

2. How should you approach the timing of the quiz?
3. What common mistake should you avoid regarding strategy application?
4. After completing the assessment, what is the most important step?
5. How can your results from the Final Assessment guide your future study?

REFERENCE

Glossary

Act essay perspectives

The three distinct viewpoints provided in the ACT Essay prompt, which students must analyze and relate to their own argument.

Composite score

The overall score on the ACT, calculated as the average of the four multiple-choice section scores (English, Math, Reading, Science), ranging from 1 to 36.

Conciseness

A principle in ACT English that favors the shortest, most direct, and grammatically correct way of expressing an idea, avoiding redundancy and wordiness.

Conflicting viewpoints passages

A type of ACT Science passage that presents two or more differing hypotheses or theories, requiring analysis of arguments and supporting evidence.

Data interpretation

The primary skill tested in the ACT Science section, involving the ability to understand and draw conclusions from information presented in graphs, tables, and experimental descriptions.

Data representation

The way information is presented, such as in tables, graphs, charts, or diagrams.

Data representation passages

A type of ACT Science passage that presents information primarily through graphs, tables, and charts, requiring data extraction and trend analysis.

Diagnostic test

An initial practice test taken to identify a student's current skill level, strengths, and weaknesses before beginning a study program.

Enhanced act

The current version of the ACT, which has undergone minor updates over time but maintains its core structure.

Equivalent answers

On the ACT English section, multiple answer choices that convey similar information, where the most concise and grammatically correct option is usually preferred.

Error analysis

The process of reviewing incorrect answers on a practice test to identify patterns, understand mistakes, and guide future study.

Final assessment

A comprehensive quiz designed to evaluate a student's mastery of all course strategies and content.

Modeling questions

Questions that require you to interpret, apply, or create a mathematical or scientific model (equation, graph, function) to represent a real-world situation or data.

National merit scholarship program

An academic competition for recognition and scholarships, primarily based on PSAT scores.

Pacing

The strategy of allocating and managing time effectively across all questions and sections of the ACT to ensure all questions are attempted within the time limits.

Pacing checkpoints

Pre-determined points within each test section where a student should check their progress against the clock to manage time effectively.

Pacing strategy

A plan for allocating your time effectively across all questions within a test section to ensure you attempt every question.

Pacing system

A structured method for managing time during a test section to ensure all questions are attempted efficiently.

Percentile rank

A measure indicating the percentage of test-takers who scored at or below a particular score.

Plugging in numbers

A math strategy where you substitute simple numerical values for variables in an algebraic problem to solve it arithmetically and test answer choices.

Pronoun agreement

The grammatical rule that states a pronoun must agree in number and gender with the noun or pronoun it refers to (its antecedent).

Quadratic formula

A mathematical formula used to find the solutions (roots) of a quadratic equation in the form $ax^2 + bx + c = 0$.

Research summaries passages

A type of ACT Science passage that describes one or more experiments, requiring understanding of experimental design, variables, and results.

Run-on sentence

A sentence error where two or more independent clauses are joined without proper punctuation or a coordinating conjunction.

Sentence fragment

An incomplete sentence that lacks a subject, a verb, or expresses an incomplete thought, presented as if it were a complete sentence.

Subject-verb agreement

The grammatical rule that states a singular subject must take a singular verb, and a plural subject must take a plural verb.

Superscore

A policy used by some colleges to combine a student's highest section scores from multiple test dates to create a new, higher overall composite score.

Targeted strategies

Specific techniques and approaches designed for particular question types or sections of the ACT.

Thesis

The main argument or central idea that an essay aims to prove or support, typically stated in the introduction.

Two-pass strategy

A method of approaching a test section by first answering all easy questions quickly, then returning to more difficult or time-consuming questions with banked time.

Wrong-answer penalty

A deduction of points for incorrect answers on a standardized test; the ACT does not have a wrong-answer penalty.

REFERENCE

Answer Key

Chapter 1: Introduction to the ACT

1. What are the four required sections of the ACT and what is the scoring range for the Composite Score?

The four required sections of the ACT are English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science. The Composite Score, which is the average of these four section scores, ranges from 1 to 36.

2. Why is time management particularly important on the ACT?

Time management is crucial on the ACT because the test is known for its tight timing. Students have a limited amount of time per question, making efficient pacing essential to attempt all questions and maximize their score.

3. What is the key strategy for the ACT English section?

The key strategy for the ACT English section is to prioritize conciseness. When multiple answer choices are grammatically correct, the shortest and most direct option is usually the best. Students should also master standard English grammar and punctuation rules.

4. What kind of knowledge is primarily tested in the ACT Science section?

The ACT Science section primarily tests data interpretation skills. It assesses a student's ability to read and understand information presented in graphs, tables, and experimental descriptions, rather than requiring extensive prior scientific knowledge.

5. What are the main components of a strong ACT essay?

A strong ACT essay requires developing your own clear perspective on a given issue, thoughtfully analyzing at least one of the provided perspectives, and supporting your argument with logical reasoning and relevant examples. It also needs effective organization and precise language use.

Chapter 2: Module 2: Section 2

1. What is the primary goal when encountering 'equivalent answers' on the ACT English section?

When encountering equivalent answers, the primary goal is to choose the most concise, clear, and grammatically correct option. The ACT favors brevity and directness, so eliminate redundant words or phrases that do not add essential meaning to the sentence.

2. Describe one effective math hack for problems with variables in the answer choices.

One effective math hack is 'plugging in numbers.' For problems with variables in the answer choices, choose simple numerical values for those variables. Solve the problem using your chosen numbers, then substitute those same numbers into each answer choice to find the one that matches your calculated result.

3. What are the four main scoring criteria for the ACT Essay?

The four main scoring criteria for the ACT Essay are Ideas and Analysis, Development and Support, Organization, and Language Use. These evaluate your ability to understand the issue, present a clear argument, support it with evidence, structure your essay logically, and use standard written English effectively.

4. Why is taking a diagnostic test important when beginning ACT self-study?

Taking a diagnostic test is important because it provides a baseline assessment of your current knowledge and skills. It helps identify your specific strengths and weaknesses across all ACT sections, allowing you to focus your study efforts more efficiently on areas where you need the most improvement.

5. List three essential items you should pack for ACT test day.

Three essential items to pack for ACT test day are your official ACT Admission Ticket, a valid photo identification, and several No. 2 pencils with good erasers. An approved calculator with fresh batteries and a watch (without an alarm) are also crucial.

Chapter 3: Mastering ACT Science and Math Essentials**1. What are the three main types of passages found in the ACT Science section, and what is the primary skill tested across all of them?**

The three main types are Data Representation, Research Summaries, and Conflicting Viewpoints. Across all passage types, the primary skill tested is the ability to interpret scientific information, analyze data, and evaluate experiments or arguments, rather than recalling specific scientific facts.

2. Describe one effective timing strategy for the ACT Science section, as suggested by the 'Drill baby, DRILL!!!' approach.

An effective timing strategy involves consistent, timed practice. Students should practice individual passages under strict time limits, for example, 5 minutes per passage. This builds speed and stamina, preparing them for the tight 35-minute section, and helps identify areas where they spend too much time.

3. Name two essential math formulas for the ACT and explain when they are typically used.

Two essential formulas are the Quadratic Formula and the Pythagorean Theorem. The Quadratic Formula ($x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$) is used to find the solutions of any quadratic equation in the form $ax^2 + bx + c = 0$. The Pythagorean Theorem ($a^2 + b^2 = c^2$) is used to find the length of a side in a right-angled triangle when the other two sides are known.

4. Identify two common bad study habits for the ACT and suggest how to correct them.

One bad habit is only taking practice tests without thorough review. To correct this, analyze every incorrect answer to understand the mistake. Another bad habit is ignoring timing during practice. To correct this, integrate strict timing into all study sessions to simulate actual test conditions and build speed.

5. How can a student determine if their ACT score is 'good' for their personal goals and college aspirations?

A student can determine if their ACT score is 'good' by comparing it to the average ACT scores of

admitted students at their target colleges. Also, understanding their percentile rank helps contextualize their performance against other test-takers. A score that meets or exceeds these benchmarks is generally considered good for their specific goals.

Chapter 4: Advanced Strategies for ACT Success

1. When is the generally recommended time for students to take their first ACT, and why?

Most students should take their first ACT during their junior year of high school. This timing ensures they have covered essential math content like Algebra II and Geometry. It also allows for potential retakes before college application deadlines in senior year.

2. What is one key difference between preparing for a good ACT score and preparing for a perfect 36?

While both require content mastery, a perfect 36 demands near-perfect accuracy across all sections. It also requires a deep understanding of test structure, common traps, and meticulous mistake analysis beyond simply knowing the correct answers.

3. Describe two essential general tips for approaching any section of the ACT.

First, always answer every question, as there is no penalty for guessing. Second, practice under timed conditions to master pacing and build stamina, which helps manage anxiety and ensures you complete each section efficiently.

4. Is the ACT Science section optional? Explain its significance for college admissions.

No, the ACT Science section is mandatory and contributes to your overall composite score. While most colleges focus on the composite score, some highly selective or STEM-focused programs may review individual section scores, making a strong Science score beneficial for your application.

5. What is a "modeling question" on the ACT, and what is one core strategy for solving it?

A modeling question asks you to interpret, apply, or create a mathematical or scientific model for a real-world scenario. A core strategy is to test specific points or scenarios by plugging in values from the problem or answer choices to see if they fit the given conditions or the model.

Chapter 5: ACT Game Plan: Format, Pacing, and Practice

1. What are the four core sections of the enhanced ACT, and which one is now optional?

The four core sections are English, Math, Reading, and Science. On the enhanced ACT, the Science section is now optional. Students should verify with their target colleges whether a Science score is required for admission.

2. Why is improving your score in a weaker section often more efficient for raising your overall Composite score?

The Composite score is an average of your core section scores. A point gained in any section contributes equally to this average. Weaker sections typically have more room for improvement, making those points easier or 'cheaper' to gain compared to further improving an already strong section.

3. Describe the 'Two-Pass Strategy' for managing time on the ACT.

The Two-Pass Strategy involves first going through a section and quickly answering all questions that are easy or within your time budget, circling and skipping any difficult ones. In the second pass, you return to the circled questions using the time saved from the first pass. This ensures you secure all easy points.

4. What are three key considerations when using official ACT practice tests effectively?

First, ration your official tests, using them for diagnosis and then for full timed rehearsals every few weeks. Second, simulate test conditions honestly, including timing, breaks, and morning start. Third, score not only by section but also by the cause of each miss (content gap, timing, or misread) to guide your study.

5. Why is it generally recommended to plan for two ACT test dates rather than just one?

Planning two test dates allows you to use superscoring, where colleges combine your best section scores from different attempts. It also significantly reduces test-day anxiety, as knowing you have a second opportunity can lead to a more relaxed and potentially higher-scoring performance on the first attempt.

Chapter 6: Final Assessment: ACT Strategy**1. What is the primary purpose of the Final Assessment in this course?**

The primary purpose of the Final Assessment is to evaluate your mastery of the pacing systems and targeted strategies taught throughout the ACT Complete Prep course. It helps you assess your ability to apply these skills under timed conditions, similar to the actual ACT.

2. How should you approach the timing of the quiz?

You should actively use a pacing system, allocating a specific amount of time per question and monitoring your progress. Avoid getting stuck on any single question. If time runs short, make an educated guess and move on.

3. What common mistake should you avoid regarding strategy application?

A common mistake is rushing through questions without fully engaging the learned strategies. It is crucial to deliberately apply techniques like process of elimination and careful reading, rather than relying on intuition alone.

4. After completing the assessment, what is the most important step?

The most important step after completing the assessment is thorough error analysis. Review every incorrect answer to understand *why* the mistake occurred, whether it was a content gap, misinterpretation, or timing issue.

5. How can your results from the Final Assessment guide your future study?

Your results can pinpoint specific areas of weakness. If you consistently miss questions on a certain topic or section, you should revisit the corresponding lessons or modules in the course for targeted review and additional practice.

CLOSING

Where to Go Next

After completing the ACT Complete Prep course, your next step is consistent, focused practice. Apply the timing systems and strategies learned to full-length practice tests. This will help you solidify your skills and build endurance for test day.

Analyze your practice test results carefully. Identify any remaining weak areas and review those specific lessons in the course and this guide. Targeted review ensures you address all challenges before the actual exam.

Once you feel confident in your preparation, schedule your ACT exam. Remember that consistent effort and strategic practice are the best ways to achieve your desired score.



MEGACOURSE

Learn Anything. Achieve Everything.

Track your progress, take the quizzes, and earn your certificate for this course at
megacourse.app/courses/act-complete-prep