

Top 50 Strategies for ACT Test Day

When it's almost test day and you've studied the material and taken the practice tests, make sure you review these strategies for test day. Here you'll find 50 essential strategies that can definitely help you earn more points on the ACT. The purpose of this post is to provide a handy, all-in-one, last-minute reminder of these valuable concepts. Use this review to check your test readiness and make sure you're prepared to do your best—and get your best score.

Before The Test

1. **Be prepared.** Study and practice consistently during your training period. Be organized.
2. **Know yourself.** Understand your strengths and weaknesses on the ACT.
3. **Change bad habits.** If you have poor study habits, it took you a while to develop them. Identify these bad habits early so you can make the necessary adjustments.
4. **Rest.** Get plenty of sleep between practice sessions. Go to bed early the night before the test.

On Test Day

5. **Dress comfortably.** Wear loose, comfortable, layered clothing. Don't forget your watch.
6. **Eat something.** Breakfast should not contain anything with too much sugar. Get your normal dose of caffeine, if any.
7. **Bring stuff.** You need your driver's license, admission ticket, number 2 pencils, a good eraser, and your calculator.
8. **Read something.** Warm up your brain by reading the newspaper or something similar. Review some practice material.

General Test-Taking Strategies

9. **Relax.** Don't panic if you are having trouble answering the questions! You do not have to answer all the questions correctly to get a good score. Take a few moments to relax if you are stressed. Put your pencil down, close your eyes, take deep breaths, and clear your mind. When you get back to the test you will feel better.
10. **Do the easy stuff first.** You do not have to answer the questions from each section in order. It is better to skip the hard ones in each test section and come back to them later. Keep moving so that you don't waste valuable time. If you get stuck, move on!
11. **Manage the grid.** Do not fill in your "bubble sheet" after every question. Mark your answers in the book and transfer them every one to two pages. Make sure to pay attention

to question numbers, especially if you skip a question. Your score depends on what is filled in on the answer sheet.

12. **Use the test booklet.** The booklet is the only scrap paper you will get. Circle your answer choices, cross out answers you eliminate, and mark questions that you need to come back to later. If you think the answer choice might work, underline it. Do the math! Draw pictures to help you figure out problems and use the space available to write down your calculations. Make notes and marks in the margins of the reading passages.
13. **Be aware of time.** Pace yourself. Read and work actively through the test. You learned during practice which questions you should focus on and which questions you should come back to later. Use a watch to time yourself. Stay focused. Ignore the environment around you.
14. **Guess wisely.** There is no scoring penalty on the ACT! Never leave a bubble blank. Eliminate answer choices that you know are wrong. The more you can eliminate, the better your chance of correctly answering the question.
15. **Stick with it.** Do not second-guess yourself. Your first answer choice is most likely to be correct. If you are not completely comfortable with your first choice, place a question mark next to your answer and come back to it later if you have time. Only change your answer when you are sure that it's wrong.

English Test Strategies

16. **Listen to your brain.** Read aloud silently. If it sounds right to you, it probably is.
17. **Avoid redundancy.** Wordiness and redundancy are never rewarded. Usually, the fewer the words that you use, the better.
18. **Take DELETE and NO CHANGE seriously.** DELETE is a viable answer choice when it eliminates redundant or irrelevant statements. Don't forget to consider the NO CHANGE answer choice. Just because a portion of the passage is underlined does not mean that there is something wrong with it.
19. **Try the answer choices.** Read each of the choices back into the sentence and then select the one that is grammatically correct and/or clearly expresses the idea.
20. **Simplify answer choices.** If one part of the answer choice is wrong, the whole answer choice is wrong!
21. **Don't make new mistakes.** Do not select an answer choice that introduces a new error to the sentence.
22. **Match the author.** When choosing answer choices, make sure they match the author's strategy and style.
23. **Stay organized.** Ideas within each essay should flow in a logical sequence.

Math Test Strategies

24. **Draw pictures.** It really helps to visualize the problem. Your sketches can be quick and a little messy. You should create tables and write out equations too.
25. **Think before computing.** Look for a way to reason through the problem. Don't just go for your calculator. When you do use your calculator, try to have an idea of what your answer should be.
26. **Answer the question that they ask you.** Cross out any irrelevant information given in the question. Complete all the steps in the problem – don't quit early.
27. **Check the choices.** Take a quick peek at the choices as you read the problem. They can provide clues about how to proceed.
28. **Test the answers.** When trying answer choices, start with the middle value. Because the answers are arranged in order, you can eliminate answer choices based on if the middle value is too high or too low.
29. **Use stand-ins.** Use this strategy when you have variables in the question and some of the same variables in the answer choices. Simplify the answer choices by substituting numbers for the variables.
30. **Simplify the question.** When reading word problems, translate them into mathematical equations and then use substitution.

Reading Test Strategies

31. **Read the question stems first.** Make notes in the passage. When the questions refer to specific lines or words, you may be able to answer the questions right away.
32. **Don't study the passage.** The ACT reading test is in an open-book format. You do not need to memorize the information for a long period of time. Read loosely and only dwell on information that you are sure is important because you need it to answer a question.
33. **Read for the main idea.** The main idea is comprised of topic, scope, and purpose.
34. **Skim the passage.** Do not stop on unfamiliar words the first time through. You may not need to know the meaning of a word to answer the questions. Just try to gain a general understanding of the structure of the passage.
35. **Read and answer the questions.** Paraphrase the question to ensure an understanding of what it is asking you.
36. **Refer back to the passage.** Questions should be answered based on the information in the passage. If a question contains references to specific lines, read a little before and a little after the lines mentioned.
37. **Predict an answer.** After finding relevant information in the passage, try to answer the question in your mind before looking at the answer choices.

38. **Use the process of elimination.** It is reliable but slow. Use it when you cannot predict an answer or your prediction is not listed as an answer choice.
39. **Move around.** Don't be afraid to skip around within the ten-question group that accompanies each passage.

Science Test Strategies

40. **Prioritize.** Choose passages in the format you like the most and with information that is the least confusing.
41. **Think first.** Understand the main idea(s) presented in the passage before reading the questions. Use common sense to avoid being tricked by distractors.
42. **Be “trendy.”** Note any relationships between variables or trends in the data represented in charts or graphs.
43. **Don't be scared by complex vocabulary.** The ACT usually defines terms that are absolutely essential to your understanding. Don't waste time trying to pronounce these new terms either.

Writing Test Strategies

44. **Carefully read the prompt.** Be certain you understand the prompt completely. When an essay argues something that is never mentioned, the highest score it can earn is a 3 on a six-point scale.
45. **Think about the prompt.** Take the time to formulate your opinion. There is no correct position to take. You just have to be able to defend your opinion.
46. **Plan your essay.** This is the most important stage of the essay-writing process. You can take up to 10 minutes to outline your paper using the scratch paper provided.
47. **Be persuasive.** Make sure you have compelling reasons and examples to support your position. Place the issue in a broader context.
48. **Consider the other side.** Be sure to address how someone might challenge or question your position.
49. **Write your essay out on the answer pages.** Do not worry about the number of examples included in your essay or the length of your essay. Focus on the quality and cohesiveness of your ideas.
50. **Review your essay.** If you have time at the end, reread your essay. Correct any mistakes in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling. Recopy any words that are difficult to read. Make your essay as polished as you can in the time allowed.

