

## When Should I Take The ACT?

### *When should I take the ACT?*

This is the question I'm sure many high school students have asked themselves over the years. You should definitely try to take the ACT at least once before your senior year, but there are three main factors that should go into deciding when you should take the ACT:

#### 1. **College Admissions Deadlines**

This is the biggest factor in deciding when you should take the ACT. You want to make sure that by the time applications are due, you have all your tests in order. Make sure to keep in mind that you need about a month *after* the test while you wait for scores to come back.

#### 2. **Your Readiness**

You don't want to take the ACT if you're not ready unless there is a college application deadline you're trying to meet. Plan to study for at least a month prior to taking the ACT, ideally longer.

#### 3. **Course load/Prep Time**

Make sure that you have enough time to prepare for the exam. If you're taking hard classes during the semester/year, or are bogged down by extracurricular activities, you might want to take the exam after breaks, like in February, after winter break, or in September, after summer break. You also want to keep in mind that some states now require you to take the ACT sometime during spring of junior year. You can find a complete listing of which states require this online to make sure you plan accordingly.

With those things in mind, I personally think that the best time to take the ACT for the first time would be early junior year of high school. If you take the exam around September, you will have plenty of time to prepare for the exam over the summer. If you want to take it a little later, you can take it in February of junior year, so you have winter break to prepare a bit more. If your state requires all juniors to take the ACT, another option is to wait and just take it for the first time then. All of these test dates give you time to retake the ACT if you don't do so well the first time.

Depending on when you want to apply for colleges, you can take the ACT again your senior year. It would be best to take it for the final time in September of your senior year so that you can have enough time (about a month) for your scores to come in and still meet early college application deadlines. If you're applying regular decision, you can take the ACT during October or December of your senior year. Once again, you want to keep in mind the amount of time you'll have to prepare. Consider your course load and the time required for completing college applications during the first semester of senior year when deciding a final test date. There is no point taking the ACT again if you don't have the time to prepare and do better.

Although I've suggested taking the ACT for the first time in your junior year, you can also opt to take it sophomore year as well. It really is different for each person but just make sure that you

feel comfortable with the date you've chosen and that you don't delay any college applications in the process. Don't stress about the test too much and instead take the time to prepare for it, at least a month in advance. Being prepared will make you feel more confident and will definitely boost your score. If you're well prepared and able minded, you might not need to take the ACT again.