

**THINKING  
ABOUT  
TAKING  
THE  
ACT?**

HERE'S SOME  
HELP.....

# 2009-2010 ACT Test Dates

## Test Dates in the U.S., U.S. Territories, and Canada

Test Date	Registration Deadline	(Late Fee Required)
September 12, 2009*	August 7, 2009	August 8 – 21, 2009
October 24, 2009	September 18, 2009	September 19 – October 2, 2009
December 12, 2009	November 6, 2009	November 7 – 20, 2009
February 6, 2010**	January 5, 2010	January 6 – 15, 2010
April 10, 2010	March 5, 2010	March 6 – 19, 2010
June 12, 2010	May 7, 2010	May 8 – 21, 2010



TAKE  
NOTE

\* The September 2009 test date is offered *only* within the 50 United States and D.C.

\*\* No test centers are scheduled in New York for the February test date.

# The ACT vs. The SAT

## What's the difference between the ACT and the SAT?

Both the ACT and the SAT are nationally administered standardized tests that help colleges evaluate candidates. Most colleges and universities accept either test. So as you begin to think about college and creating the best application package possible, your admissions plan should begin with the question, "Which test should I take?" When weighing your options, keep in mind that there are differences in test structure and the type of content assessed. Use the chart below to see which test makes the most of your strengths to help you determine which test might be best for you.

	ACT	SAT
Length	3 hours, 25 minutes (including the 30-minute optional Writing Test)	3 hours, 45 minutes
Sections	4 test sections (5 with the optional Essay, known as the Writing Test)	10 Sections
Areas Tested	English, Math, Reading, Science, Writing (optional)	Critical Reading, Math, Writing (includes the Essay), Experimental (unscored)
Reading (ACT) / Critical Reading (SAT)	4 Reading Comprehension passages, 10 questions per passage	Mix of Reading Comprehension and Sentence Completion questions that require vocabulary expertise
Science	Science Reasoning (analysis, interpretation, evaluation, problem solving) covered	Science not included
Math	Math accounts for 1/4 of overall score  Topics Covered: Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry (4 questions)	Math accounts for 1/3 of overall score  Topics Covered: Basic Geometry and Algebra II
Essay	Last thing you do (optional); 30 minutes  Not included in composite score	First thing you do; 25 minutes  Factored into overall score
Scoring	Total composite score of 1-36 (based on average of 4 tests)  4 scores of 1-36 for each test  Score of 0-12 for the optional Essay	Total score out of 2400  3 scores of 200-800 for each section  2 sub-scores of 20-80 for writing multiple choice and 0-12 for the Essay
Wrong Answer Penalty	No wrong answer penalty	Yes, 1/4 point per wrong answer (except for Math Grid-in questions)
Sending Score History	You decide which score is sent	Your entire score history will be sent automatically

## SAT

## VS

## ACT

Seven times per year

When is it given?

Six times per year

Ten-section exam: 3 critical reading sections, 3 math sections, 3 writing sections, and 1 experimental section (which is masked to look like a regular section)

Five-section exam: English, Math, Reading, Science Reasoning, and Writing (optional). An experimental section is added to tests on certain dates only, and is clearly experimental

Math: up to Geometry and Algebra 2  
Reading: sentence completion, short and long critical reading passages, reading comprehension  
Writing: grammar, usage, word choice, and essay writing

What is the test content?

Math: up to trigonometry  
Science: charts, graphs, and data interpretation  
Reading: 4 passages, one each of prose fiction, social science, humanities, and natural science  
English: grammar  
Writing: persuasive essay

Yes. 1/4 of a point for each wrong answer on multiple-choice questions

Is there a penalty for wrong answers?

No.

200-800 per section, added together for a combined score of 600-2400

How is the test scored?

1-36 for each subject, averaged for a composite score; 2-12 on the writing test

Yes. If a student requests a score report be sent to specific colleges, the report includes the scores the student received on every SAT taken.

Are all scores sent to schools?

No. There is a "Score Choice" option. Students can choose which schools receive their scores and which scores the schools see.

Scholarship purposes

Are there other uses for the exams?

Scholarship purposes and certain statewide testing programs

At least six weeks before the test date

Best time to register?

At least four weeks before the test date

Collegeboard.com

Need more information?

ACTStudent.org

## Comparing SAT and ACT Scores

ACT	SAT Math and Reading	2400-Point SAT Estimate
36	1600	2400
35	1560-1590	2360
34	1510-1550	2300
33	1460-1500	2220
32	1410-1450	2140
31	1360-1400	2070
30	1320-1350	2010
29	1280-1310	1950
28	1240-1270	1890
27	1210-1230	1830
26	1170-1200	1770
25	1130-1160	1710
24	1090-1120	1650
23	1060-1080	1600
22	1020-1050	1550
21	980-1010	1500
20	940-970	1440
19	900-930	1380
18	860-890	1320
17	810-850	1250
16	760-800	1180
15	710-750	1100
14	660-700	1020
13	590-650	930
12	520-580	830
11	500-510	750

# ACT Test Format

## ACT Time Breakdown

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English	45 minutes
Reading	35 minutes
Math	60 minutes
Science	35 minutes

### Optional

Writing	30 minutes
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## ACT English Format

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The ACT English test consists of five passages each followed by questions. English questions test students' skills in punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, strategy, organization and style.

## ACT Mathematics Format

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Similar to the SAT Math section, ACT Mathematics tests students on arithmetic, geometry, and algebra.

## ACT Reading Format

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Students are given four passages that are of the same level of college freshman courses. Students' skills in reading comprehension are tested.

## ACT Science Format

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The ACT Science test measures the skills required in the natural sciences and assumes that students are in the process of taking core high school science classes.

## ACT Writing (Optional) Format

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The Writing Test is a 30-minute essay test that measures your writing skills—specifically those writing skills emphasized in high school English classes and in entry-level college composition courses. The test consists of one writing prompt that will define an issue and describe two points of view on that issue. You are asked to respond to a question about your position on the issue described in the writing prompt. In doing so, you may adopt one or the other of the perspectives described in the prompt, or you may present a different point of view on the issue. Your score will not be affected by the point of view you take on the issue. Some colleges require the Writing Test; others do not. Most colleges will accept scores from the Writing Test even if they do not require it.

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# ACT Tips

## OVERALL TEST TACTICS:

1. Learn the section directions now. Use the time saved during the test to work on questions.
  2. Answer easy questions first. Mark skipped questions in your exam book so you can quickly return to them later.
  3. Guess...if you can eliminate at least one choice.
  4. You can write in the test book: cross out wrong answers; do scratch work.
  5. Avoid stray marks on the answer sheet. A machine scores your test and can't distinguish between a correct answer and a careless doodle.
  6. Easy questions usually precede hard ones.
  7. Mark only one answer per question.
  8. Skip any question if you haven't the faintest idea about the answer. You don't lose points.
  9. Understand the scoring! You get a point for a right answer. There is no deduction for omitted answers or for wrong answers. However, filling in each question with even a guess is better than leaving the answer grid blank.
  10. Keep checking that you are placing your answer in the correct section and number on the answer sheet.
  11. Don't spend too much time on any one question. You should spend only seconds on the easiest questions, and hesitate to spend more than 1-2 minutes on even the hardest ones.
  12. Practice, practice, practice!
  13. Remember that the ACT consists of a series of small, timed, mini-tests. Keep track of the time you're allotted for each one and how much time remains.
  14. Bring a watch to the test center. You can't be guaranteed that there'll be a working clock there.
  15. Don't change an answer unless you're sure you made an error.
  16. Read the words in the question carefully. Be sure to answer the question asked and not the question you recall from a practice test.
  17. Know the Question Types to Expect on the ACT \* 19 analogies \* 19 sentence completion \* 40 reading comprehension \* 35 math multiple-choices \* 15 quantitative comparisons \* 10 student-produced responses
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# SPECIFIC SECTIONAL STRATEGIES

## English, Reading, and Science Reasoning Sections:

1. Review English grammar and usage, as well as punctuation, parts of speech, sentence structure, and word parts.
2. Don't rush your selection. Consider all the answers to make the best choice.
3. Use the context of nearby words to figure out unknown words.
4. Pace yourself. You have roughly (actually slightly less than) 1/2 minute for each question.
5. Examine each underlined portion with care.  
It will suggest what is being sought from you by its context in the passage that the question refers to.
6. Choose the best answer possible, using the process of elimination to narrow your choices.
7. After you've made your choice, mentally substitute your answer into the underlined portion to see if it seems correct.
8. If you don't know the meaning a word, try to recall if you've ever heard it in an expression.  
The context of the expression may suggest the meaning of the word.
9. Beware of obvious answers! They may be there only to mislead you.
10. You should base your answers to the questions solely on what is stated or implied in the passages.
11. Carefully read any introductory text.
12. Skip questions you don't know. Return to them after answering other easier questions.
13. First and last sentences of each paragraph are critical.
14. Read the passages before reading the questions.
15. Don't waste time memorizing details.

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## MATH Section - STANDARD MULTIPLE CHOICE:

1. Read the question well. Be sure to select the best answer for the variable, value, or expression that is requested!
2. Learn in advance all of the critical definitions, formulas, and concepts that appear in common questions.
3. Remember to use the test booklet for scratch work, as well as for marking up any diagrams/graphs.
4. Early questions in this section are easier. Spend less time on them.
5. Don't get carried away with detailed calculations. Look for a trick or a shortcut if the question seems time consuming.
6. When a question contains a weird symbol, just substitute the accompanying definition when figuring out the best answer choice.



## **MATH Section - QUANTITATIVE COMPARISONS:**

1. Don't ever guess at Choice E. There are only four choices!
2. Always consider values that are fractional (between 0 and 1), zero, negative, or non-integer.
3. Factor out, then cancel, any common expressions or quantities in both Columns A and B. Remember that you are just trying to make relative comparisons.
4. Questions are simpler and should take less time than the Standard Multiple Choice. Look closely. The answer is often apparent without any calculations.
5. Write on any diagrams to help clarify any values, angles, sides, etc.
6. Compare; don't solve!
7. Simplify one or both sides whenever possible before comparing.

# ACT Test Prep - Tips

## Take Realistic Practice Tests

One effective way to improve your ACT score would be to practice as many ACT type questions as possible. As the exam approaches try to take at least a few mock ACT exams, and to try to simulate the actual testing environment as closely as possible (meaning no breaks, snacks, music, phone calls, etc.).

## Tips: Before The Test

- \* Take as many practice tests as possible either from the The Real ACT Prep Guide or from one of the other ACT study guides.
- \* Become familiar with the answer sheet and how to enter the information required.
- \* Make sure you know how to get to the test center and any special instructions for finding the entrance on Saturday or Sunday.
- \* Leave extra time in case of delays while you are travelling to the test center.
- \* Make sure you have everything you need for the test ready the night before. Use the following checklist.
  - Your Admission ticket
  - Appropriate Photo ID
  - Several #2 pencils and erasers
  - Approved calculator with fresh batteries
  - A watch
- \* Get a good night's sleep before the test.

## Tips: During The Test

- \* Carefully read the instructions on the cover of the test booklet.
- \* Read the directions for each section carefully.
- \* Read each question carefully.
- \* Pace yourself—don't spend too much time on a single passage or question.

\* Use a soft lead No. 2 pencil with a good eraser; do not use a mechanical pencil, ink pen or correction fluid.

\* Only the math section asks for the “correct” answer. The rest of the sections ask for the “best” answer. Therefore, you need to read all the answers before selecting one. Do not select the first correct answer you see.

\* Answer the easy questions first, then go back and answer the more difficult ones.

\* On difficult questions, eliminate as many incorrect answers as you can, then make an educated guess among those remaining.

\* Answer every question. Your scores on the multiple-choice tests are based on the number of questions you answer correctly. There is no penalty for guessing.

\* Review your work. If you finish a test before time is up, go back and check your work. Make sure you only change answers from the current section. You are not allowed to mark or change answers from other sections.

\* Mark your answers neatly. If you erase, erase completely and cleanly without smudging.

\* Do not mark or alter any ovals on a test or continue writing on the Writing Test after time has been called or you will be disqualified from the exam.

[http://www.testprepreview.com/act\\_practice.htm](http://www.testprepreview.com/act_practice.htm)

# Top 10 SAT and ACT Test-Taking Tips

Brought to you by the American School Counselor Association

## 1. Be Equipped

On the night before the test you should gather everything you'll need: the admission ticket, a valid form of photo identification, several #2 pencils, a calculator with fresh batteries (for the SAT only), a watch, and a high-energy snack.

## 2. Don't Cram

You've worked hard. The best thing to do the evening before the test is to get a good night's sleep. You've covered the content and you've perfected the skills. Now it's time to get in test mode -- calm, rested, confident, and ready.

## 3. Dress in Layers

The climate in test centers can vary from sauna-like to frigid. Be prepared for both extremes and everything in-between. You need to be comfortable to do your best.

## 4. Arrive Early

You may want to scope out your test location before test day to ensure that you know where you're going. Getting to the test should be the least of your concerns.

## 5. Don't Spend too Much Time on One Question

Each question is worth the same number of points. If a question is confusing or too time-consuming, don't lose your cool. Instead, move on to greener pastures. You can come back to hard questions if you have time at the end of a section.

## 6. Don't Look for Unscored Questions/Sections

The experimental section on the SAT is well-camouflaged. Sometimes the ACT contains experimental questions that are scattered throughout the sections. Do your best on every question--that way, you're covered.

## 7. Keep Track of Where You Are in a Section

On the SAT, obvious answer choices early in a set may be correct. Obvious choices near the end of a set are often booby traps.

## 8. Guess Aggressively

If you don't know an answer, don't leave the question blank or guess randomly. Eliminate the choices you know are wrong, then make an educated guess from the remaining options. Remember, if you can

eliminate even one answer choice then it pays to guess on the SAT. On the ACT, students aren't penalized for guessing. Only the correct answers count toward their score, so it is better to guess than leave a blank.

### **9. Be Careful Filling in the Answer Grid**

Make sure you're filling in answers next to the right numbers.

### **10. Relax**

Your attitude and outlook are crucial to your test-day performance. Be confident.

## Sites for SAT/ACT practice

[www.freesat1prep.com](http://www.freesat1prep.com)

[www.freeacttestprep.com](http://www.freeacttestprep.com)

[www.english-test.net/sat/index5.html](http://www.english-test.net/sat/index5.html)

[www.takesat.com/math.php](http://www.takesat.com/math.php)

[www.number2.com](http://www.number2.com)

[www.act-sat-prep.com](http://www.act-sat-prep.com)

[www.actstudent.org/sampletest](http://www.actstudent.org/sampletest)

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

[www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

[www.testprepreview.com](http://www.testprepreview.com)

[www.4tests.com](http://www.4tests.com)

[www.testmagic.com/FreeStuff/newsletter.htm](http://www.testmagic.com/FreeStuff/newsletter.htm)

[www.internet4classrooms.com](http://www.internet4classrooms.com)

[www.gocollege.com/admissions/preparing/tests](http://www.gocollege.com/admissions/preparing/tests)

[www.onlinetestprep.com](http://www.onlinetestprep.com)

**\*\*Also, check [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and search for SAT and ACT help. There are 8 videos posted for ACT science and there may be other postings for additional tips and help.**