



ACT General Test-Taking Strategies

1. **Plan Your Study Time**– Set aside small amounts of time for studying over an extended period (even months), make your schedule flexible in case something else comes up, and reward yourself
2. **Stay Positive**– You can do well!
3. **Physical Preparation**– Exercise, Diet (eat a breakfast without sugar and carbohydrates, instead try to eat proteins and bring a snack for the 10 minute break), Rest
4. **Take a Practice Test**
5. **Learn to Pace Yourself**– Figure a certain amount of time you want to give yourself per question and practice answering those questions in a set amount of time using a watch that you will also be able to use on the ACT
6. **Know the Directions and Understand the Answer Document**– the ACT directions are always the same, so learn them in advanced
7. **Read Carefully and Thoroughly**– watch for the question’s wording. Specifically look for words such as “not” or “least”. Don’t make careless errors by skimming the questions. Pay close attention to qualifying words like “all”, “most”, “some”, “none”, “always”, “usually”, “seldom”, “sometimes”, “never”, “best”, “worst”, “highest”, “lowest”, “smaller”, and “larger”.
8. **Decide on Strategies for Answering Easier and Harder Questions**– Work through the test section quickly, answering only the questions that you are pretty sure about the first time and skip the difficult questions. Then go back and work through the more difficult questions. The downside to this strategy is that it is easy to make mistakes on your answer sheet, so you should be very careful when you mark your answer sheet (after you skip a question– make sure that the number of the question matches the number on the answer sheet). Also, mark the questions that you skip in your test booklet so that you will be able to find it easily when you go back.
9. **Decide on a Strategy for Guessing**– Try to eliminate the answers that you know are wrong, and take your best guess among the remaining answers. When you have no idea choose one column for all of your guesses. For example, every time I read a question and have no idea whatsoever what the answer is, I guess “C” or “H”. Sticking with the same column gives you a greater probability of answering correctly.
10. **Don’t Leave Questions Unanswered**—The ACT does NOT penalize for guessing, so you want to fill in a bubble for every single question. To make sure you don’t run out of time, when the 5 minute warning is called, start bubbling from the bottom of that section up, leaving a few questions blank. Then if you finish with those questions, you can always erase any incorrect choices on the questions you bubbled in.
11. **Plan to Check Your Work**– When you are practicing pacing yourself, leave time to check your work. Check your answer sheet to make sure you have answered all of the questions. Look for pencil marks that could be misread, and make sure each question only has one answer marked. If you have time, go back and read the questions and check your answers.
12. **Stay Calm**—If you start to get tired or panic, pause and take some deep breaths. Also, don’t let the ACT get in your head. Don’t worry about how ACT might be trying to trick you. Just pick the answer you think is best.
13. **Write in Your Test Booklet**—Take notes, underline/circle keywords, and cross out wrong answers!