

## ACT Assessment Reading Test Overview

The test has 40 questions, 10 questions per passage. Each passage will come from one of the following categories:

Prose Fiction- These are short stories or passages taken from novels. Take note of the mood, emotion, and relationship of characters.

Humanities- These essays are written as fact and tend to describe or analyze works of art, or ideals. The people in these passages are not fictional, they are real.

Social Studies- Information is usually gathered by research. Note cause-effect relationships, comparisons, and sequences of events.

Natural Sciences- These passages present a science topic, note cause-effect, comparisons, sequence of events, as well as specific laws, rules and theories that are mentioned.

- Split into 9 groups. Read excerpts of the 4 types of passages (page 236 in the 2012 or 2013 edition of *The Princeton Review* ACT book. Read the 4 different styles, and then rank them from the easiest to hardest. What should your reading order be?

\_\_\_\_\_Prose Fiction

\_\_\_\_\_Social Science

\_\_\_\_\_Humanities

\_\_\_\_\_Natural Science

- Reading Strategy
  - Step 1: Read the question stem (not the passage or the answer choices). Circle any key words in the question stem. Repeat for all 10 questions.
  - Step 2: Skim through the passage. Do not read it like you would a novel. Instead scan for key words and topic sentences. Underline key sentences or key words that you circled in step 1.
  - Step 3: Go back to the questions. Paraphrase the answer in your head BEFORE looking at the answer choices. This will decrease ACT's ability to trick you.
  - Step 4: Sort which answer choices are "MAYBES" and which ones are "NOs". Cross out the "NO" answers so that you are not distracted by them.
  - Step 5: Compare your "MAYBES", paying special attention to how the answers differ.
  - Step 6: Pick the correct answer or skip.
- Tricky Answer Choices:
  - **Look out for "negative" words** in the question, such as EXCEPT, LEAST or NOT
  - Vocabulary Questions: When it asks you to define a word, try inserting the answer choices into the sentence to see which one makes the most sense in the context.

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- Tricky Answer Choices (continued):
  - **Don't choose an answer choice just because it uses the same words.** A lot of time ACT will use the same words but the meaning will be different. For example, in the passage it might say, "Stacy loves taking her Anatomy and Physiology class with Andrew. He helps her study before every test..." However one of the answer choices may say, "Stacy loves her Anatomy and Physiology class." Are those two thoughts the same? No? This is why Step 3 is so important! If you answer in your own words first before looking at the answer choices, then you are less likely to fall victim to this ACT trick.
  - **Watch out for the questions in which the information has been flipped.** For example, the passage may say, "After studying Japanese for 2 years, I finally had the opportunity to visit Tokyo." ACT might try to trick you with an answer choice that says, "I visited Tokyo, where I studied Japanese for 2 years." A lot of the elements are the same in these two statements, but the order in which they happened has been flipped. Step 3 will also help with these types of answer choices.
  - **Look out for extreme words**, such as NEVER, ALWAYS, INVARIABLY, COMPLETELY, PERFECTLY, AND ABSOLUTELY. There is a big difference between saying, "I'm right" and "I'm invariably right."
  - **Look out for "world peace" answer choices.** I call these answer choices "world peace" choices because they remind me of the movie "Miss Congeniality" when the contestants answer their interview questions, and everyone says world peace, even if it didn't answer the question directly because it sounded nice. These are answer choices that sound nice or that you know to be true, but they are not actually talked about in the passage.
  
- Let's Practice!
  - Split into partners
  - Together, try the 6-step reading strategy. Usually you will only have around 9 minutes on each passage if you want to get through all 4 passages in 35 minutes, but because you are working with a partner and learning a new system, we are going to give you 16 minutes to finish passage 1 and answer the questions. Refer to the front of this handout to make sure you are following all 6 steps.
  - Now let's try again individually. You will have 10 minutes to do passage 2 and answer all the questions. You can refer to the 6-step reading strategy if you need to.
  
- How can you practice at home?
  - Practice the 6-step strategy with old ACT tests and study guides. This reading strategy is a little different than what we are used to, so it will take practice to be able to do it quickly.
  - Read at least 2 articles every day. This will increase your reading speed, vocabulary, and comprehension.
  - Practice skimming. Look for the main ideas and topic sentences in an article without reading every word.