

ACT Test Taking Strategies

- I. First and Foremost: Proverbs 3:5 – Trust the Lord
Remember that you are a valuable and beloved child of God

- II. ACT Overview – Format
 - A. Four Sections with Optional Fifth (Writing)
 1. **English**: 75 questions – 45 minutes
 2. **Math**: 60 questions – 60 minutes
 - a. Prealgebra 20-25%
 - b. Elementary Algebra 15-20%
 - c. Intermediate Algebra 15-20%
 - d. Coordinate Geometry 15-20%
 - e. Plane Geometry 20-25%
 - f. Trigonometry 5-10%
 3. **Reading**: 40 questions – 35 minutes
4 passages that each have 10 questions; always in the same order:
 - a. Prose Fiction
 - b. Social Studies
 - c. Humanities
 - d. Natural Sciences
 4. **Science**: 40 questions – 35 minutes
7 science passages, followed by questions; 3 types of passages covering areas of Biology, Chemistry, Earth and Science, Physics
 - a. Data representation (3)
 - b. Research summary (3)
 - c. Conflicting viewpoints (1)

III. General Advice and Time Table

Relax and trust yourself. Have confidence. Remember your history. Sleep well. Eat well. Drink water. Pray for calmness. Follow this plan:

1. Two months before the test

- a. Register for the ACT; choose your date and location; note that registration deadlines are typically about a month before the test
- b. Check out an ACT prep book from your library
- c. Understand the format of the test and the typical types of questions
- d. Work through practice questions/tests
- e. Use your resources: LHS teachers, practice tests, YouTube videos
- f. Just google ACT tips and you may find some good advice!

2. A week before the test

- a. Double check when and where you are registered
- b. Make sure you know how to get to testing site, how long the drive is, etc.
- c. Start to gather the supplies you need: *ACT ticket (printed out), photo ID, several #2 pencils (at least three; no mechanical pencils), calculator, eraser, watch (no noises/alarms), extra batteries for calculator (just in case), water bottle, snack*
- d. Review the format of the ACT
- e. Review ACT tips/strategies

3. The night before the test

- a. Relax – stretch, read, talk with friends, laugh
- b. Pack what you need for the ACT in a bag/backpack
- c. Set your alarm; give yourself enough time in the morning so that you won't feel rushed
- d. Go to bed on time

4. The morning of the test

- a. Eat a filling, healthy breakfast
- b. Grab your ACT bag
- c. Leave your house on time; you may want to arrive at the ACT testing site between 7:30 and 7:45 for an 8am test

5. During the test

- a. Remain calm, confident, and focused; breathe; work quickly
- b. Double check that you are bubbling in answers on the correct lines
- c. (See "ACT Tips" below for more specific information)

6. After the test

- a. Feel good about your work! Just completing the test is an accomplishment. Thank God for this opportunity.

- b. Remember that one testing experience does not define you as a person.
- c. If you desire a higher score, sign up to take the test again! A second (or third) time taking the ACT may significantly raise your score and provide you with more college scholarship opportunities.

IV. ACT Tips

1. **Set a good pace**

- a. Before taking the ACT, time yourself taking practice tests; learn which tests you tend to run out of time on and/or which you breeze through quickly
- b. Remember that time is of the essence! Work as quickly and as accurately as you can. Don't daydream or lose focus!
- c. For some students, circling the correct answers in the test booklet and then bubbling in answers may increase rate; however, do this one test booklet page at a time and keep an eye on the time - you wouldn't want the test to end before you bubble in your answers!

2. **Use process of elimination (POE)**

- a. The right answer is one of the answer choices right in front of you... you just need to choose it!
- b. If you can't quickly pick out the right answer, use POE
- c. Eliminate the answers that you know are wrong
- d. Choose the best answer out of what is left

3. **Answer everything**

- a. There is no penalty for wrong answers, so leave nothing blank
- b. Often, first instincts are correct
- c. Make an educated guess... or a random guess
- d. *Note:* Choose a consistent letter for random guesses (e.g. always guess "c" or "d" – see "Never" below)

4. **"Now/Later/Never" AKA "Two Runs"**

- a. Try make it through each section twice
- b. First Run
 - i. Answer the questions that are quick and easy ("**Now**")
 - ii. Circle/star the questions that you think you might be able to figure out with some time/work; these questions will be saved for the second run ("**LATER**")
 - iii. Use POE or just guess (using a consistent letter) on the hard questions that you don't think you would be able to figure if you had more time

- c. Second Run
 - i. Go back to the circled/starred questions and work them out
 - ii. Use POE, “plug & chug,” or another strategy
 - iii. If you can’t figure out the answer, make an educated or random guess and move on
- d. Make sure you are moving quickly through the test!

V. Tips for Each Section

1. English

- a. Answer questions as they appear in the narrative; don’t wait until you finish reading to answer the questions
- b. Recognize that there are main four categories for questions; review grammatical rules/do practice questions from these categories and learn WHY you miss practice problems
 - i. Punctuation: commas, apostrophes, dashes, etc.
 - ii. Word form: Verb tense/singular or plural, pronouns, etc.
 - iii. Logic: Where/if a sentence should go in the passage, etc.
 - iv. Main ideas: purpose of a sentence/passage/paragraph, etc.
- c. Avoid wordy or redundant answers; the most concise choice is often the correct one (e.g. “ATM machine” or “past memories”)
- d. Review tricky words (e.g. except/accept; their/there; choose/chose)
- e. If you are having trouble on a question, say it in your head with each of the answer choices; consider going with your gut on the answer that sounds right

2. Math

- a. Use the “Two Runs” strategy on this section (see above)
- b. Write in the test booklet! Don’t worry about trying to “show your work” since no one will be looking at your booklet, but do write out problems as needed so that you can catch careless mistakes
- c. Similarly, draw and label pictures on the test booklet; this can be especially helpful for word problems
- d. Remember that all questions are worth the same point value; although you should work quickly, don’t risk losing points by making careless mistakes on the easier questions
- e. Use some plug-and-chug: if you get stuck, plug in the variables given in the multiple-choice answers; work each possibility until you find the correct solution

3. Reading

- a. This section consists of four passages: 1.) Prose Fiction; 2.) Social Science; 3.) Humanities; and 4.) Natural Science
- b. After working through practice tests, determine which passage type is your favorite/the easiest; on the ACT start with your easiest passage type and work your way to the hardest one
- c. Also, determine if you do better with first reading the passage and then answering the question or reading a question and then finding the answer in the passage; use your strategy
- d. As you read, underline important information and/or jot down general ideas from the paragraph(s) in the margins so that you will easily see where in the passage to look for certain information
- e. After reading the question but before looking at the answers, mentally put the answer in your own words; then, see if there is a given answer that closely resembles your answer

4. Science

- a. This section is fast! Pick your answer and move along!
- b. It consists of 7 passages each followed by questions. Become familiar with the 3 types of passages and what type of information each of them give you (charts/graphs vs. narratives)
- c. Choose to do your favorite (best) types of passages first:
 - i. Data Representation (3): information about a topic
 - ii. Research Summary (3): a series of experiments
 - iii. Conflicting Viewpoints (1): different theories about a topic
- d. Write on the test booklet! Underline important words/definitions/data, jot down what each graph axis measures, circle the dependent and independent variables, etc.

VI. Scores

a. **What is your goal?**

- i. Shoot for something challenging but reasonable
- ii. Typically, score of 18 is needed to enter college

b. **Average ACT scores** prepscholar.com

(Caution: can vary yearly, but generally...)

- i. University of Missouri (20-24)
- ii. University of Kansas (20-24)
- iii. Truman State (25-30)
- iv. Pitt State (19-21)
- v. School of the Ozarks (18-20)
- vi. Emporia State (18-20)
- vii. Local community/junior colleges -often have an “open admission policy” but strong scores are helpful to move along
- viii. Private/Christian Colleges – generally in the 20s as well
- ix. Ivy Leagues like Harvard/Yale/Princeton would like to see 30s

c. **Typical scores for scholarships:**

- i. 33-36 Excellent scholarships, Full Rides (with strong GPA)
- ii. 30-32 Significant scholarship money - “Missouri Bright Flight;” typically \$3000/yr from state (plus a 31+ puts you in a good range for other large scholarships)
- iii. 27-29 some scholarship money (\$1000 to \$2000 annually)
- iv. Remember that non-ACT/GPA scholarships exist; look for them!

d. **Ways to raise your score**

- i. Take the ACT again
 1. A past LHS student had to take the ACT 5 times (she got the same score three times on tests 2, 3, and 4!) before achieving the score she desired
 2. Colleges tend to only look at the best score; it’s perfectly fine to take the ACT multiple times
 3. Some colleges “Superscore” taking highest individual test scores and calculating a new composite score across all test dates
- ii. Continue practicing
 1. Use practice questions/tests; figure out patterns to the questions you tend to get wrong; understand how to find the correct answer choices
 2. Capitalize on your best section(s); find ways to “outsmart” the tricky questions on your most difficult section(s)

VII. Calming Techniques

Remember that a little anxiety is normal. It's a sign that you care. However, too much anxiety may interfere with your ability to think clearly and demonstrate your knowledge; try some of the following suggestions to help you remain calm and confident.

Also, do not be afraid to talk with a professional if your anxiety is interfering with your happiness, health, or peace. Remember Mr. Rogers, "Find the helpers."

1. Try some breathing exercises

- a. Slow, deep breaths
- b. Try this one! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kprpJe0tGuc>
- c. Check out the Yoga with Adrienne YouTube channel for some more breathing, meditation, and stretching exercises

2. Use positive self-talk

- a. Be your #1 fan!
- b. Visualize yourself staying calm and confident during the test
- c. Remember that your thoughts may subconsciously determine your actions which determines your reality

3. Find things that brings you joy and peace

- a. Build time in your schedule to do what you enjoy
- b. E.g. reading for pleasure, creating art, singing, running, cooking...

5. Trust yourself and God

- a. You can do this!
- b. No matter what, you are loved by God and by your LHS community
- c. Testing is important. Your GPA is important. However, your "whole-self" matters even more – creativity, kindness, leadership experiences, church and community involvement, service, etc.
- d. Pep talk from Kid President 😊 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-gQLqv9f4o>

Some Resources:

<http://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/4-act-tips>

<http://www.studygs.net/tstprp8.htm>

<http://blog.prepscholar.com/future-act-test-dates>

-English Tips: <https://www.kaptest.com/study/act/top-10-tips-for-act-english/>

-Math Tips: <https://www.kaptest.com/study/act/10-must-know-act-math-tips/>

-Reading Tips: <https://www.kaptest.com/study/act/10-must-know-act-reading-tips/>

-Science Tips: <https://www.kaptest.com/study/act/8-must-know-act-science-tips/>

school and local libraries for ACT study guides/test taking booklets

*ACT Test Dates for 2017-18

Test Date	Registration Date
Oct.28, 2017	Sept. 22, 2017
Dec. 9, 2017	Nov. 3, 2017
Feb. 10, 2018	Jan. 12, 2018
April 14, 2018	March 9,2018
June 9, 2018	May 4, 2018
July 14, 2018	June 15, 2018

*Accommodations for testing can be made in advance when warranted and with the proper documentation.

Remember, LHS is an A+ School -

Missouri Community Colleges or vocational/technical schools (refer to: dhe.mo.gov)

1. US Citizen or permanent resident
2. Written agreement with school prior to graduation
3. Graduate with a GPA 2.5 or higher on 4.0 scale
4. 50 Service Hours of unpaid tutoring/mentoring
5. 95% attendance overall during 9th – 12th grades
6. Achieved a proficient score on Algebra 1
7. Good Citizenship (no use of drugs/alcohol)