

5 Minutes Remaining...What Now?

For most students, the challenge of the ACT is time management more than the content of the questions. It's a fast paced test and difficult to address all of the questions in the allotted time.

General Tips:

- Focus on getting a particular number of questions correct rather than trying to answer every question. For example, if your goal is to get into the high 20's, you would need to answer about 45-50 questions correctly on the math section. It's better to take time to answer questions correctly than to rush to the end, make simple mistakes along the way, and still not answer the last few questions correctly.
- Capitalize on your strengths. Remember that all questions are worth the same amount. If you are struggling on a question, skip it and return later if there is time.
- There is no penalty for answering a question incorrectly on the ACT so be sure to put an answer down for every question even if it is a blind guess.
- When blind guessing, choose the same answer for every question. You will likely still get about 20% of the questions correct.

English:

- Read the passages as you are answering the questions. Scan quickly rather than reading in depth. You want just the overall point of the passage in order to answer the organization and other rhetorical skills questions.
- When running low on time, tackle the questions that are easier to do with little or no context. For example, verb errors are easier to address.
- The most time consuming questions are the ones that ask purpose of essay, should an addition or deletion be made, and order of sentences or paragraphs. For example, in test one in The Real ACT Prep Guide, I would make a guess on questions 60, 73, 74, and 75 if I was running out of time.
- Last ditch effort: choose the shortest answer. Redundancy and wordiness are frowned upon on standardized tests so the shortest answer is often also the correct one. This is not a good technique to use overall but can come in handy if you only have 1-2 minutes remaining and 10 questions left. For example, on #58 on pg 160, the correct answer is G, which is also the shortest.

- Another way to eliminate as a last resort is to eliminate answers that are far from the others. For example, on #63 on pg. 161, answer choice B is the only one that uses semicolons. The other options all have commas so it's unlikely that B is the right answer. Again, this is not a good overall technique to rely on but can help with process of elimination when trying to maximize points with only 1-2 minutes remaining in a section.

Math:

- Don't get stuck on a problem. If you know that a problem will take you a long time to answer, move on.
- Use estimation. On #37, you are told that the ladder is 10 feet from the building and the ladder is 30 feet tall. A ladder cannot reach higher than its own height so D and E do not make sense.
- Draw a picture to help. When you draw a picture for the above problem, you see that it is a triangle. 10, 20, and 30 cannot form a triangle. Therefore, the answer is C without doing any actual math.
- Use given figures. Technically, the figures do not have to be drawn to scale on the ACT. However, they are rarely, if ever, intentionally misleading. When running low on time, use them to eliminate answers. For example, in #40 on pg. 173, the angle in question is definitely not small enough to be 15° and too small to be 45° . You can probably guess that it is either H or J.
- Skip problems that will be time consuming or do not have an obvious formula to use. For example, in test #1, questions 49 and 52 will likely be time consuming.
- Try numbers to test a problem. For example, on #51 on pg. 176, try plugging in 2 for x. You would get $5 > 7$. This isn't true so B and D are not true. Try 0. You would get $3 > 5$. Not true so E is out. Try -2. You would get $1 > 3$. Again not true so C is out. A is your only remaining answer and is correct.
- Look at answer choices so you don't do more work than necessary. For example, on #55 on pg. 177, all of the answers have $y = -2x$ and $x = 3$ so we do not need to determine the equations of the lines, only the direction of the inequality symbols.
- Use your calculator. For example, #57 on pg 178 can be entered into the y= of your graphing calculator to give you the correct graph. NOTE: be careful to enter parentheses properly. It should be entered as $y = (2x^2 + x) / x$

- Don't let questions scare you because they look difficult or may be an unfamiliar topic. For example, #60 on pg. 179 uses the difference identity, which is a more advanced topic. However, the problem gives you the difference identity and all the trig functions so it really becomes a simple substitution problem.
- Choose numbers. For example, #59 is an algebra problem. However, using algebra can be time consuming and leave room for simple errors. Another method is to choose a value for t, say t=5. Now plug in to find x and y. $x=2(5)-9$ so $x=1$ and $y=5-5$ so $y=0$. Now plug in the x and y values that you found into the answer choices to see which one gives a true statement.
 - A) $0=1-1/2=0$
 - B) $0=(19-1)/2=9$
 - C) $0=14-2(1)=12$
 You could continue but, as you can see, A is correct.

Reading

- It is common to run out of time on the reading section. Because of this, you should read your weakest passage last. For example, the prose fiction passage is always first but, if this is your weakest passage, it would be best to skip it and read your stronger passages first. NOTE: be sure to skip the numbers on your scantron as well.
- If you are having difficulty with timing, you may get to the last passage with only a few minutes remaining. It will not be enough time to read the full passage so try to answer the less time consuming questions that do not require full knowledge of the passage, such as vocab in context like #16 on pg. 183.
- With limited time, guess on questions that are more time consuming such as primary purpose questions and questions that say "EXCEPT". These generally require full understanding of the passage or more hunting through the passage.

Science

- Do not get bogged down in the details. Questions rarely ask about the details in the paragraphs that describe the experiments. Get a gist of the experiment and trends in the data in 1-2 minutes and then jump into the questions.
- Skip the passage that compares the two theories as this one is generally the most time consuming because it does require a full read through. It can be

identified by the two passages or by the number of questions. It is the only passage that has 7 questions.

- The last question in each passage is usually the most challenging as it often asks to extend the knowledge learned from the experiment to another situation or future experiment. When running low on time, skip questions that will be more time consuming. Then, return when you have more time or put a blind guess.