

ACT Prep Tips and Advice

General

1. The best way to improve your ACT score is to do at least 4-5 timed official practice ACT's and do written corrections for the problems you get wrong.
2. Take the ACT at least twice officially that you actually prepare for. Most people get nervous under pressure and under-perform their first time. The only cure is experience and exposure.

English

1. The shortest and simplest answer is usually right. This isn't always true, so don't go crazy with it, but it's a good rule of thumb.
2. Use your "Inner Ear." Most people have good grammar instincts from years of reading and listening to English, even if they don't know the technical grammar rules for things. So if you read the whole sentence with all 4 answer choices, take pauses where the commas are, and listen to how it sounds, you'll usually be able to tell what "sounds good" or "sounds bad."

Math

1. The main thing for the ACT Math is volume and memorizing formulas. For volume, I mean doing timed exams, re-working the problems you get wrong, doing more timed exams, going back and doing a 2nd set of corrections for the problems you got wrong on the old exams to engrain them, etc. Plan on 4-5 timed exams and 2-3 sets of corrections as a good foundation.
2. The ACT Math is more memorization-oriented than the SAT Math because it doesn't give you any formulas and the questions it asks emphasize knowing your formulas/facts more than the SAT does. So make flash cards for the formulas and facts that come up that you don't know and review those as part of your prep, in addition to your timed practice exams and corrections.

Reading

1. The main issue people usually have with the ACT Reading is how fast-paced it is. Three things usually help with this: practice (plan on doing 4-5 timed Reading exams before you get the timing down), keeping an eye on the time, and sometimes going straight to the questions.
2. If you do decide to go straight to the questions, start with the line reference questions (the ones where it tells you exactly where to go), then the key word ones (a specific name, date, etc. you can skim for easily and find), and the general ones last (questions with no lines/key words).
3. Be as thorough as you can while still finishing. Find concrete evidence, read carefully, etc.

Science

1. For Science, there's nothing you really need to know, since everything is in the passages. So it all comes down to practice. Plan on at least 4-5 Science exams to get it down.
2. When solving problems, it helps to do 1 thing at a time to avoid getting overwhelmed. For example, first find Figure 2. Then find the line for Uranium. Then read the info for the graph. And so on. If you try to do the whole question in 1 lump, it's easy to get stuck.
3. Underline details in the question. It draws your attention to little details and you'll make fewer mistakes. It also helps you break the question down and digest it easier.
4. Go straight to the questions. It saves time.

Matthew Knight

Tutor, Magnolia Prep

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318-286-7556, matthew.knight@magnoliaprep.com, www.magnoliaprep.com