

# The **ACT** Course Book

ENGLISH, READING, & WRITING

Focusing on the Individual Student



## **Copyright Statement**

The ACT Course Book, along with all Summit Educational Group Course Materials, is protected by copyright. Under no circumstances may any Summit materials be reproduced, distributed, published, or licensed by any means.

Summit Educational Group reserves the right to refuse to sell materials to any individual, school, district, or organization that fails to comply with our copyright policies.

Third party materials used to supplement Summit Course Materials are subject to copyright protection vested in their respective publishers. These materials are likewise not reproducible under any circumstances.

## **Ownership of Trademarks**

Summit Educational Group is the owner of the trademarks "Summit Educational Group" and the pictured Summit logo, as well as other marks that the Company may seek to use and protect from time to time in the ordinary course of business.

ACT is a trademark of ACT, Inc.

All other trademarks referenced are the property of their respective owners.

Copyright ©2017 Summit Educational Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-0-692-91427-4

---

# CONTENTS

## TEST-TAKING FUNDAMENTALS

About the ACT	2
Your Commitment	3
ACT Structure	4
Content	5
Scoring	6
Knowing Your Limits	8

## ENGLISH OVERVIEW

The English Test	12
Format	13
Attractors	15
Setting Your Goal	16
Working Through the English Test	18
General Tips	20

## ENGLISH

Pronouns	24
Subject-Verb Agreement	28
Verb Tense	30
Adjectives versus Adverbs	32
Idioms	32
Diction	34
Fragments	38
Run-Ons	40
Parallelism	42
Modifiers	44
Periods	48
Semicolons	50
Colons	50
Commas	52
Apostrophes	56

Main Idea	62
Intent	64
Organization	66
Addition	68
Deletion	70
Transitions	72
Style	76
Wordiness	78
English Practice	85

## **READING OVERVIEW**

The Reading Test	120
Format	121
Attractors	122
Setting Your Goal	124
Working Through the Reading Test	126

## **READING**

Active Reading	130
Literary Narrative or Prose Fiction Passages	132
Social Science Passages	133
Humanities Passages	134
Natural Science Passages	135
Answering the Questions	136
Anticipating the Answer	137
Process of Elimination	142
Detail	148
Generalization	150
Main Idea	152
Compare & Contrast	154
Cause & Effect	156
Inference	158
Purpose	160
Structure	162

Words in Context	164
Voice	166
Point of View	168
Argument	170
Paired Passages	172
Reading Practice	177
<b>WRITING OVERVIEW</b>	
Format	212
Scoring	213
ACT Essay Scoring Rubric	214
General Tips	216
<b>WRITING</b>	
The Writing Prompt	220
Working Through the Writing Test	222
Analyzing the Issue	224
Assessing Perspectives	226
Preparing to Write	232
Introduction	236
Body Paragraphs	240
Prove	242
Disprove	246
Compare	250
Conclusion	252
Proofread	254
Writing Effectively	256
Writing Practice	263
<b>ANSWER KEY</b>	297

# Preface

Since 1988, when two Yale University graduates started Summit Educational Group, tens of thousands of students have benefited from Summit's innovative, comprehensive, and highly effective test preparation. You will, too.

Successful test-takers not only possess the necessary academic skills but also understand how to take the ACT. Through your ACT program, you'll learn both. You'll review and develop the academic skills you need, and you'll learn practical, powerful and up-to-date test-taking strategies.

The *Summit SAT Course Book* provides the skills, strategies, and practice necessary for success on the ACT. The result of much research and revision, this book is the most effective, innovative and comprehensive preparation tool available.

This book's first chapter – Test-Taking Fundamentals – gives students a solid foundation of ACT information and general test-taking strategies. The following chapters cover the verbal content strands of the ACT – English, Reading, and Writing. Each chapter is divided into manageable topic modules. Modules consist of the skills, strategies, and common question types for particular topics, *Try It Out* questions, and *Put It Together* questions. At the end of each chapter, homework questions provide additional practice.

Some English modules include frequencies for specific question types. These are not absolute, but are general trends based on research of many official ACTs.

We are confident that you will not find a more complete or effective ACT program anywhere.

We value your feedback and are always striving to improve our materials. Please write to us with comments, questions, or suggestions for future editions at:

[edits@mytutor.com](mailto:edits@mytutor.com)

Your program will give you the skills, knowledge, and confidence you need to score your best.

Good luck, and have fun!

# English Summary

## Pronouns

- A pronoun must clearly refer back to the noun or nouns it represents.
- To check for the correct pronoun in a compound phrase, ignore the rest of the group.
- Don't use *that* or *which* when referring to people. People are always *who* or *whom*.
- The pronoun "who" always refers to the subject. The pronoun "whom" always refers to an object.

## Subject-Verb Agreement

- Singular subjects require singular verbs, and plural subjects require plural verbs.
- To simplify sentences, remove all extra information between the subject and the verb.
- Subjects grouped by "and" are plural, even if the "and" joins two singular words.
- When the subject follows the verb, flip the sentence to put the subject first.

## Verb Tense

- Verb tense must be consistent with the timeline presented in the rest of the passage.

## Adjectives versus Adverbs

- Use adjectives to describe nouns. Use adverbs to describe verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

## Idioms

- On the ACT, idioms typically appear in the form of verbs with certain prepositions.
- There are too many idioms to memorize; the key to knowing English idioms is familiarity with the language. The best way to learn idioms is to read regularly.

## Diction

- Be careful as you consider answer choices – an incorrect answer may sound right if you are used to hearing it in casual conversation.

## Fragments

- Be careful with verbs ending in *ing*. These are sometimes used as a description of the subject rather than the subject's action.
- Unnecessary words or punctuation can create fragments.

### Run-ons

- Many run-on problems result from using commas improperly or not using conjunctions.
- Some run-on sentences are best fixed with transitions.

### Parallelism

- When a sentence groups ideas, such as in a list, they must be presented in “parallel” form. Make sure that parts of speech are consistent.
- When two things are compared, they must be parallel. Consider the logic of the comparison; it must be explicitly clear that the same types of things are being compared.

### Modifiers

- Descriptions must be placed next to the things they describe.

### Periods

- Correct period placement will result in logical and complete sentences both before and after the punctuation.

### Semicolons

- Semicolons, like periods, are used to separate independent clauses.

### Colons

- Colons can only be used following independent clauses.
- Colons are most commonly used to introduce lists, but they may also be used to present noun phrases, quotations, or examples which clarify or elaborate on the independent clause.

### Commas

- If a sentence begins with a phrase that sets time, place, or purpose, then the phrase should be followed by a comma.
- When two independent clauses are joined by a conjunction, such as “and” or “but,” there should be a comma placed before the conjunction.
- Commas separate items in a list.
- Clauses with nonessential information are offset by commas.

### Apostrophes

- When the possessor is a singular noun, possession can be indicated by adding 's.
- When the possessor is a plural noun ending in *s*, possession can be indicated by adding an apostrophe. Plural nouns that do not end in *s* can be made possessive by adding 's.
- “It’s” is always a contraction of “it is.” Likewise, “its” is always a possessive pronoun.

### Main Idea

- Every part of a passage should contribute to the passage's main idea.

### Intent

- When asked to judge a passage based on the author's goals, pay careful attention to the wording of the question and answer choices.

### Organization

- When organized properly, an essay's ideas should build upon each other and transition naturally.

### Addition

- Only choose to add material if it introduces new, useful information to the passage.

### Deletion

- Sentences should be deleted if they are not relevant to the focus of the passage or do not support and strengthen the passage's ideas.

### Transitions

- Transitions can be used to show the relationship between sentences or between clauses in a sentence.

### Style

- Make sure the language of passages is consistent in tone and expresses appropriate ideas.
- It is unacceptable to use slang or colloquialisms in the type of writing that appears on the English Test, even if the colloquial or slang word conveys the proper meaning.

### Wordiness

- Shorter and simpler is usually better. Questions on wordiness require you to eliminate redundancies and irrelevant information.

# Reading Summary

## Reading the Passages

- Stay engaged. While reading, you should be thinking about the information, reflecting on what you have already read, anticipating what will come next, and analyzing how the passage is constructed.
- Map the passage. Find the main idea of each paragraph.
- Make notes that help you understand the reading.
- Treat paired passages as two separate passages.
  1. Read the first passage and answer the questions for it.
  2. Read the second passage and answer the questions for it.
  3. Answer the questions that concern both passages.

## Answering the Questions

- Questions do not follow the order of the passage, nor do they progress from easy to difficult.
- Tackle each passage's questions using the following three steps:
  1. Attack the easy and medium questions first.
  2. Make a second pass through the questions to work on the problems you skipped and marked, focusing on the ones you think you are most likely to answer correctly.
  3. Guess on the remaining questions.
- When a question refers to specific line numbers, read a few lines before and after the given lines to get the full context.
- Understand the question before you look at the answer choices.
- Make sure that you've found the best answer, not just a good one. Reading questions, especially difficult ones, will usually contain at least one or two choices that are "almost right."

## Writing Summary

- ❑ Before you begin your essay, read the assignment carefully and consider the issue and perspectives.
- ❑ Take a minute to plan your essay. Make a simple outline of the points you want to cover in your essay.
- ❑ It is usually best to have four or five paragraphs in your essay: the introduction, two or three supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion.
- ❑ A simple way to organize your essay is to create three body paragraphs: one for defending your thesis, and the other two for assessing the other viewpoints presented in the prompt.
- ❑ Take time during the last two minutes to read through your essay. You won't have time to make major changes, but you can make some minor improvements. It's easy to skip or misspell words when you're trying to write quickly, so this step is very important.
- ❑ Make sure each sentence is necessary. Do not try to stuff your essay with irrelevant facts.



## English Overview

---

□ The English Test	12
□ Format	13
□ Attractors	15
□ Setting Your Goal	16
□ Working Through the English Test	18
□ General Tips	20

## The English Test

- ❑ The ACT English Test measures your skill at evaluating and improving short essays. You've likely been practicing most of these skills on school writing assignments for years.

Format	75 questions 5 passages Multiple-choice 4 answer choices
Content	Grammar and Usage Sentence Structure Punctuation Strategy Organization Style
Scoring	English Test Score: 1-36 Subscores: Conventions of Standard English Production of Writing Knowledge of Language
Time	45 minutes

- ❑ The ACT English Test contains a certain number of questions per topic:

Content Area	Questions	Sample Topics
Conventions of Standard English	38-42	Usage: pronouns, verb tenses, idioms Sentence Structure & Formation: run-ons, modifiers Punctuation: commas, semicolons, apostrophes
Production of Writing	22-24	Topic Development: main idea, intent Organization, Unity, & Cohesion: transitions
Knowledge of Language	10-14	style, wordiness

## General Tips

Learn to use the following array of strategies. You'll become a proactive test-taker, and you'll improve your ability to solve the more difficult questions.

- ❑ **Use Process of Elimination (POE).** Even if you can't find the correct answer, you'll almost always be able to eliminate one or two incorrect answers. Sometimes you'll "hear" the error, and other times certain answer choices will be written in an obviously incorrect way. The more answer choices you can eliminate, the greater the likelihood you'll get the right answer.

**IMPORTANT:** Once you have eliminated an answer, cross it out in the test booklet. Crossing out answers prevents you from wasting time looking at eliminated answers over and over again.

- ❑ **Shorter is often better.** The ACT prefers writing that is precise and concise. Answer choices with convoluted or redundant writing will be incorrect. On the English Test, the shortest answer choice is often the correct answer.

For much of human history, it was believed by people that coral are plants.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) people believed it that
- C) people believing
- D) people believed

- ❑ If there are two errors in a question, deal with one at a time. Eliminate all of the choices that contain one error, and then repeat the process with the second error.

Also mentioned in the referendum was: the requirement that townspeople pay extra taxes and the demand that the speed limit in school zones be reduced.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) was
- C) were:
- D) were

- ❑ **Don't always trust your ear.** Standard written English may be more formal than what you are used to hearing.

Even if something sounds right the first time you read through it, double check for frequently tested grammatical errors. There are certain things that you might say, hear, or write in everyday life that contain grammatical errors.

The bread from the bakery around the corner from my grandmother's house is always better then our bakery.

- A) NO CHANGE
  - B) than our bakery.
  - C) then the bread from our bakery.
  - D) than the bread from our bakery.
- ❑ **Don't find errors where none exist.** Just because something is underlined doesn't mean that it contains an error. "NO CHANGE" is correct approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the time it appears as an answer choice – just as frequently as any other answer choice.
  - ❑ **When there is an actual question, read it carefully.** The keys to the correct answer often lie within the question.

Underline the part of the following question that gives a clue about what you should focus on as you solve the question.

"The writer wants to convey an attitude of genuine interest. Which answer choice best accomplishes this goal?"

- ❑ Questions about the main idea or author's intent or purpose will often require reading the entire paragraph or beyond.
- ❑ Try to spot and fix the error before looking at the answer choices.



## English

---

□ Conventions of Standard English		□ Production of Writing	
○ Usage		○ Topic Development	
● Pronouns	24	● Main Idea	62
● Subject-Verb Agreement	28	● Intent	64
● Verb Tenses	30	○ Organization, Unity, & Cohesion	
● Adjectives versus Adverbs	32	● Organization	66
● Idioms	32	● Addition	68
● Diction	34	● Deletion	70
○ Sentence Structure & Formation		● Transitions	72
● Fragments	38	□ Knowledge of Language	
● Run-Ons	40	● Style	76
● Parallelism	42	● Wordiness	78
● Modifiers	44		
○ Punctuation			
● Periods	48		
● Colons & Semicolons	50		
● Commas	52		
● Apostrophes	56		

## Pronouns

3-6 per test

Pronoun questions often require you to determine whether a pronoun should be singular or plural, and they often test your knowledge of apostrophes. Challenging pronoun questions involve ambiguous pronouns that must be replaced with specific nouns.

- ❑ Pronouns can be used as subjects, objects, or possessives.

SUBJECT	OBJECT	POSSESSIVE
I	me	my, mine
you	you	your, yours
he, she	him, her	his, her, hers
we	us	our, ours
they	them	their, theirs
who	whom	whose
it	it	its
one	one	one's

- ❑ A pronoun must clearly refer back to the noun or nouns it represents.

  
Oscar mentioned that his sisters are older than he is.

- ❑ If there is no noun or multiple nouns that a pronoun can refer to, use a specific noun instead.

A seat belt should be worn to protect (*it/a passenger*) from potential injuries.

Most pearls aren't found by divers but are cultivated in farms. (*These/Pearls*) vary in price depending on their quality and origin.

- ❑ To check for the correct pronoun in a compound phrase, ignore the rest of the group.

Incorrect: My father gave presents to my brother and I.

Correct: My father gave presents to... me.

(*He/Him*) and his cousin went shopping for stereo equipment.

- ❑ Don't use "that" or "which" when referring to people. People are always "who" or "whom."

Mark Twain expressed his belief that politicians were generally frauds (*that/who*) did not know more than a tiny fraction of what they claimed to know.

- ❑ The pronoun "who" always refers to the subject. The pronoun "whom" always refers to an object.

In order to determine whether a pronoun is a subject or object, try plugging in an easier pronoun (such as "he/him") and see which works best. If the objective-case pronoun ("him") works best, use the objective case for the pronoun in question ("whom"). This is called the "M test," because many object pronouns have the letter *m*.

- ❑ If a pronoun follows a preposition, such as "to" or "for," it is an object.

Jamie was a respected reporter (*who/whom*) would speak honestly about the facts.

To (*who/whom*) should the committee award the prize if no one deserves it?

Humility is only had by people (*who/whom*) realize and appreciate their own limitations.

**PUT IT TOGETHER**

On most weekends, Jess's sister visits her, and they gossip and cook. It's usually the same conversations and rumors, and it's always the same recipe. For them, the ritual is key. Flour and lard fill a large bowl on the kitchen table. Jess adds salt and baking powder and then tells her younger sister to help mix. As her<sub>1</sub> and her sister work, the dough seems to come alive under their fingers. Last, they add the warm water: just enough to hold the dough together. The recipe is simple and ancient. Their grandmother used to assure them that anybody has the skills to make something as easy as tortillas. Jess rolls pieces of dough into balls. As she presses it<sub>2</sub> into a flat circle, Jess can almost feel the ghosts of her grandmother's hands folding around her own, guiding her. She knows, from memory of so many traditional meals at home, the exact thickness the dough should be. Her motions are careful, rhythmic, exactly as the women in her family have always done. Her sister watches and copies, with a bit of clumsiness. Someday, Jess and her sister will become mothers and teach the recipe to its<sub>3</sub> own daughters. For now, they are more focused on memories of their grandmother, whose<sub>4</sub> cooking had been the symbol of their heritage as they had grown up.

1. A. NO CHANGE  
B. it  
C. she  
D. they
2. F. NO CHANGE  
G. that  
H. this one  
J. one
3. A. NO CHANGE  
B. they're  
C. their  
D. it's
4. F. NO CHANGE  
G. of whose  
H. whom  
J. her

**Try rereading the sentence with each answer choice.**

While an iron pan heats on the stove, Jess sips her coffee.

She then places two of the raw tortillas in it. In a moment,  
5  
there is the familiar smell of smoke. She imagines watching  
her future children as they try to make their own tortillas for  
the first time. And she feels as though her grandmother is  
watching over her now, with love and pride.

5. A. NO CHANGE  
B. that  
C. them  
D. the pan

What does "it" refer to?

## Subject-Verb Agreement

1-3 per test

Subject-verb agreement is not often tested directly on the ACT. However, the skill of determining whether a subject or verb is singular or plural is useful for several types of pronoun and apostrophe questions.

- ❑ Singular subjects require singular verbs, and plural subjects require plural verbs.

The teacher of the school's chemistry and physics classes assigns too much homework.

The other teachers, whom I prefer, usually assign little or no homework.

- ❑ To simplify sentences, remove all extra information between the subject and the verb. Then, make sure the subject and verb agree.

The birthday party for my nieces, as well as their twenty friends, was a success.

A whole group of tourists and children (*was/were*) gathered around to watch the mime.

- ❑ Appositive phrases (nonessential details set off by commas or dashes) are not part of the subject, even if the appositive phrases include other nouns.

Vanessa, along with the rest of her class, (*is/are*) hoping for a vacation.

- ❑ Subjects grouped by "and" are plural, even if the "and" joins two singular words.

The wet dog and its muddy owner (*want/wants*) to go inside.

You can simplify compound subjects by replacing them with a plural pronoun.

Incorrect: He and my brother goes to school.

Simplified: They ... .. (*go/goes*) to school.

Correct: He and my brother go to school.

- ❑ When the subject follows the verb, flip the sentence to put the subject first.

Here (*is/are*) the source of the problems that have been ruining our budget.

Scattered around the west side of campus (*is/are*) a set of paintings and a collection of sculpture installations.



## Reading Overview

---

- The Reading Test 120
- Format 121
- Attractors 122
- Setting Your Goal 124
- Working Through the Reading Test 126

## The Reading Test

- ❑ The ACT Reading Test measures your skills in reading, comprehending, and analyzing short passages. You've likely been practicing most of these skills on school assignments for years.

Format	40 questions Multiple-choice 4 answer choices
Content	Prose Fiction / Literary Narrative Social Science Humanities Natural Science
Scoring	Reading Test Score: 1-36 Subscores: Key Ideas & Details Craft & Structure Integration of Knowledge & Ideas
Time	35 minutes

- ❑ The ACT Reading Test contains 4 passages (3 long passages and 1 pair of short passages) with 10 questions each. You have roughly 8½ minutes to spend on each passage – about 4 minutes to read the passage and 30 seconds to answer each question.
- ❑ According to the ACT, Reading questions ask you to “use referring and reasoning skills to determine main ideas; locate and interpret significant details; understand sequences of events; make comparisons; comprehend cause-effect relationships; determine the meaning of context-dependent words, phrases, and statements; draw generalizations; and analyze the author’s or narrator’s voice and method.”
- ❑ Each Reading Test contains a specific number of questions in certain categories:

Category	Questions	Question Types
Key Ideas & Details	22-24	Detail, generalization, main idea, compare & contrast, cause & effect, inference
Craft & Structure	10-12	Purpose, structure, words in context, voice, point of view
Integration of Knowledge & Ideas	5-7	Argument, paired passages

## Attractors

- Spot and avoid attractor answer choices.

The test writers predict potential mistakes by students and include those mistakes as answer choices. In other words, they set traps for the unsuspecting student. We call these answer choices “attractors.” Attractors show up most often on medium and difficult problems.

Try to spot the attractor answer choices in the following problems.  
Consider how a student might mistakenly choose each attractor answer.

**NATURAL SCIENCE:** This passage is adapted from “The Awful Power Beneath Us,” an article by Joe Chandler.

As the world’s first national park, Yellowstone has long been admired for its natural beauty and unique geology. In Yellowstone, the ground rumbles and geysers erupt with such regularity that visitors have been lulled into seeing these seismic events as harmless spectacles. Unknown to many is that the same phenomenon that creates the Hawaiian Islands also powers this geothermal activity. For millions of years, a “hotspot” in the Earth’s molten core has pushed magma up under the land of Yellowstone. Beneath the park lies a thousand cubic miles of magma, more than a quadrillion (1 with 15 zeroes) gallons of molten rock. This immense magma chamber is known as a caldera, and it can be thought of as an engine of heat which powers the many hot springs and other wonders, such as the famous Old Faithful. A thin layer of earth lays over the caldera, sealing the incredible heat and creating an immense pressure. Eventually, this engine will generate too much energy to be contained by the earth above it, and the entire area will erupt.

It will go like this: The massive explosion will obliterate anything within 100 miles and will be supersonic, so the boom won’t be heard until after the destruction. Lava will be flung out, starting countless

fires. The states of Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and Montana will be forfeit. Ash plumes will rise miles high, as twelve trillion cubic tons of dust rise from Yellowstone and spread across the western half of America. A new cold will come, because the sun won’t have the strength to penetrate the ashen clouds. Across the entire planet, average temperatures will drop by 20 degrees Fahrenheit. As the Yellowstone caldera is emptied, the land will break and collapse, creating violent earthquakes. Sound farfetched? This has happened before. 74,000 years ago, the eruption of the Toba caldera in Indonesia created a global winter that nearly brought the extinction of all mankind.

We often take for granted that our planet has been, of recent, relatively peaceful. The terrible potential that lies is Yellowstone’s future is testament to the awe-inspiring power that has always rested beneath our feet.

1. As it is used in line 32, the word *forfeit* most nearly means:
  - A. disappointed
  - B. resigned
  - C. folded
  - D. ruined
  
2. The main function of the first paragraph is to:
  - F. contrast the geography of Yellowstone with that of Hawaii.
  - G. describe the historical eruptions that have occurred in Yellowstone.
  - H. explain the geological features that will lead to a future eruption in Yellowstone.
  - J. illustrate the destructive effects of a caldera eruption.

❑ **Use the Two-Pass Approach for each passage.**

**Step 1:** On your first pass through a Reading passage, answer all of the questions you can, but don't get bogged down on an individual question. If you're stuck, mark it and move on. Remember: Each question is worth the same amount – 1 raw point.

**Step 2:** Make a second pass.

If you skipped and/or marked any, go back and work on these questions – it shouldn't be more than 1-3 per passage. Focus first on the ones you think you have the best chance of answering correctly. For some, you'll find the right answer fairly easily. For the others, aggressively eliminate answer choices and make educated guesses.

By answering simpler questions, you may have gained a stronger understanding of the passage, which can help you answer the questions that seemed too challenging at first.

**Step 3:** Don't leave any answers blank.

At this point, you shouldn't have any questions unanswered, but if you do, guess on any remaining questions before you move on to the next passage. Even if you feel like you really don't know the answer, it will be easier to guess while you're still thinking about the passage.

- ❑ There is no penalty for guessing, so make sure you answer every question. With about 30 seconds remaining for the test, you should answer any remaining questions.

- ❑ **Use Process of Elimination (POE).** Even if you can't find the correct answer, you'll almost always be able to eliminate one or two incorrect answers. The more answer choices you can eliminate, the greater the likelihood you'll get the right answer.

**IMPORTANT:** Once you have eliminated an answer, cross it out in the test booklet. Crossing out answers prevents you from wasting time looking at eliminated answers over and over again.



## Reading

---

□ Active Reading	130
□ Passage Types	132
□ Answering Questions	136
□ Anticipating the Answer	137
□ Process of Elimination	142
□ Question Types	
○ Key Ideas and Details	
• Detail	148
• Generalization	150
• Main Idea	152
• Compare & Contrast	154
• Cause & Effect	156
• Inference	158
○ Craft and Structure	
• Purpose	160
• Structure	162
• Words in Context	164
• Voice	166
• Point of View	168
○ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	
• Argument	170
• Paired Passages	172

## Active Reading

- ❑ We do not recommend speed-reading, nor do we recommend reading the questions first. It is difficult enough to understand an ACT passage without trying to keep all the questions in your head at the same time!
- ❑ **Stay engaged.** Do not read passively, waiting for the passage to reveal information to you. Instead, interact directly with the passage and think about what the author saying and trying to accomplish.

Never expect a passage to interest or entertain you. It's your job to get involved.

- ❑ **Map the Passage.** Use your Active Reading skills to develop an organized understanding of a Reading passage by finding the main idea of each paragraph.

Each paragraph generally develops a thought, example, detail, or point. By finding the main idea in each paragraph, you can create an organized map of how the passage works and how the overall main idea is developed.

In addition to helping you organize the information of the passage, Mapping also ensures that you do not lose focus or read through the whole passage without understanding it.

- ❑ **Read with your pencil.** Make notes that help you understand the reading. You can underline important words and phrases, mark where there are contrasting ideas, note where you have questions or confusion, and jot down ideas.

Use a question mark to identify any part of the passage you don't understand. Often, when you read further, you will find additional information that clarifies the parts that had confused you before.

- ❑ Ask questions while you read:
  - What is the main point of each paragraph? Underline it, or make a note in the margin.
  - How does each paragraph fit into the development of the passage? What does each paragraph accomplish?
  - What is the main idea of the passage as a whole?
  - What is the author's purpose in writing this passage?
  - What is the author's tone/attitude? Look for strong verbs and adjectives.

**TRY IT OUT**

Map the passage and answer the following questions.

**NATURAL SCIENCES:** This passage is adapted from “A Sense of Scale” by Erin Bracken.

Despite what you may see in the movies, the natural world contains no giant gorillas or miniscule people. This is because the real world depends upon several guiding rules, one of which is the limit of scaling, or the size of an organism. In all living things, there is a balance between surface area and volume which governs the maximum and minimum size of organisms.

A popular theme in monster movies is to pick a creature (lizard, human, spider, etc.) and make it absurdly large. However, this trend in Hollywood shows a blatant ignorance of organic biology. The issue can be easily explained in terms of geometry: as size increases, area is squared and volume is cubed. This leads to several issues with scaling. For example, if the dimensions of an organism are made 10 times larger, it gains 100 times more surface area for its lungs, but its body mass increases by 1000 times. Therefore, the organism won’t be able to absorb enough oxygen. Creatures such as King Kong would be too short of breath to put up much of a fight. Another consideration is that of muscle and bone. These materials gain strength based on thickness, or “lateral area,” which also scales at a much lower rate than volume. So, these giant creatures would be so weak they would be unable to move, and would likely break their bones from the pressure of their own weight.

On the other side of the scaling issue are animals such as hummingbirds, which simply cannot get any smaller. Since volume scales more than surface area, smaller animals will have relatively large surface area compared to their size. As surface area is the amount of an organism that is exposed to the outside, these small animals are more susceptible to the effects of environmental temperatures. For tiny animals, the line between health and starvation is a thin one—hummingbirds must eat more than their weight in food each day in order to maintain enough energy and warmth to survive. For Hollywood, the world of shrunken organisms is also problematic. In films such as *Fantastic Voyage* and *Honey, I Shrank the Kids*, people are miniaturized, more than a hundred times smaller. At one-hundredth normal size, a person loses heat at a rate 10,000 times less, because of their decreased surface area. However, the mass of the body, which generates heat, has decreased by

1,000,000 times. Because of this, it would be a struggle to stay warm enough to stay alive.

As a biologist, I sometimes ignore these facts. It will only ruin movies for me, and others, to note that Godzilla’s skin would burst from the pressure of his immense size, or that a shrunken human would require condensed molecules (making the person as dense as the core of the sun). Sometimes, for the sake of entertainment, we must ignore the limits of reality to fully enjoy the wonders of imagination.

1. What is the main idea of the first paragraph?
2. What is the main idea of the second paragraph?
3. What is the main idea of the third paragraph?
4. What is the main idea of the last paragraph?
5. What is the main idea of the whole passage?

**Simplify dense or complex passages by paraphrasing. Can you summarize lines 29-40 in your own words?**



## Writing Overview

---

□ Format	212
□ Scoring	213
□ ACT Essay Scoring Rubric	214
□ General Tips	216

## Format

- ❑ The ACT Writing Test measures your skill at analyzing situations, evaluating arguments, and effectively developing ideas through writing. You will evaluate three perspectives on a complex issue and create an argument supported by your reasoning and experience.
- ❑ The Writing Test is optional, and therefore it appears at the end of the exam.
- ❑ You have 40 minutes to complete the Writing Test.
- ❑ Learn the instructions before you take the test.

The instructions are the same on every ACT. Memorize the format and instructions before you take the test. At test time, you can skip the instructions and focus on the questions.

### Essay Task

Write a unified, coherent essay in which you evaluate multiple perspectives on the (*prompt topic*). In your essay, be sure to:

- clearly state your own perspective on the issue and analyze the relationship between your perspective and at least one other perspective
- develop and support your ideas with reasoning and examples
- organize your ideas clearly and logically
- communicate your ideas effectively in standard written English

Your perspective may be in full agreement with any of the others, in partial agreement, or wholly different.

### Planning Your Essay

Your work on these prewriting pages will not be scored.

Use the space below and on the back cover to generate ideas and plan your essay. You may wish to consider the following as you think critically about the task:

Strengths and weaknesses of the three given perspectives

- What insights do they offer, and what do they fail to consider?
- Why might they be persuasive to others, or why might they fail to persuade?

Your own knowledge, experience, and values

- What is your perspective on this issue, and what are its strengths and weaknesses?
- How will you support your perspective in your essay?

## Scoring

- ❑ You are given a single Writing score on a 1-12 scale. This score is the average of your 4 Writing subscores.

The Writing score is **not** factored into the 1-36 ACT Composite score.

- ❑ The 4 Writing subscores focus on specific skills you must display in your essay.

### **Ideas & Analysis**

Scores in this category represent a student's ability to comprehend the rhetorical situation; generate productive ideas in response; think critically about the task; evaluate and analyze multiple perspectives; and employ effective rhetorical strategies.

### **Development & Support**

Scores in this category reflect a student's ability to illustrate, explain, and substantiate claims and ideas. Strong writers discuss and explore their ideas, making clear their pertinence by way of detailed, persuasive examples and sound reasoning. They bolster their claims by marshaling evidentiary support, drawing from their knowledge and relevant experience.

### **Organization**

Scores in this category indicate a student's ability to structure an argument logically, sequence ideas strategically, and organize writing clearly.

### **Language Use & Conventions**

Scores in this category denote a student's ability to use standard written English in service of a persuasive purpose. Competent writers demonstrate control over the conventions of grammar, syntax, word usage, and mechanics. Stronger writers make effective rhetorical choices in voice and tone, and express nuanced ideas by way of precise word choice.



## Writing

---

□ The Writing Prompt	220
□ Working Through the Writing Test	222
□ Analyzing the Issue	224
□ Assessing Perspectives	226
□ Preparing to Write	232
□ Introduction	236
□ Body Paragraphs	240
○ Prove	242
○ Disprove	246
○ Compare	250
□ Conclusion	252
□ Proofreading	254
□ Writing Effectively	256

# The Writing Prompt

## Trade Unions

Trade unions, or labor unions, are organizations of workers who have banded together to achieve common goals. These unions are created in order to balance the power between employers and employees. By threatening to collectively “go on strike” and stop working, employees are able to bargain for better working conditions, such as increased pay or benefits. Trade unions were first created during the Industrial Revolution, when employers took advantage of the unregulated economy and treated their employees unfairly by reducing wages and creating unsafe work environments. Today, trade unions exist in many forms and have different goals and levels of influence.

*Read and carefully consider these perspectives. Each suggests a particular way of thinking about the problems or benefits associated with trade unions.*

### Perspective One

Government policies prevent the exploitation of workers, which eliminates the need for trade unions. Unlike benefits from unions, these policies benefit all workers equally and therefore don't create unfair advantages for unionized companies.

### Perspective Two

People have a natural right to peaceful assembly. As long as there is a balance of power, with neither the employer nor employees gaining an unfair advantage over the other, unions are a helpful assertion of our workers' rights.

### Perspective Three

Trade unions enable employees to give each other undeserved benefits. If workers are protected by their fellow union members, employers have more difficulty firing or reprimanding employees, which reduces the incentive for better work.

### Essay Task

Write a unified, coherent essay in which you evaluate multiple perspectives on trade unions. In your essay, be sure to:

- clearly state your own perspective on the issue and analyze the relationship between your perspective and at least one other perspective
- develop and support your ideas with reasoning and examples
- organize your ideas clearly and logically
- communicate your ideas effectively in standard written English

Your perspective may be in full agreement with any of the others, in partial agreement, or wholly different.

### Planning Your Essay

*Your work on these prewriting pages will not be scored.*

Use the space below and on the back cover to generate ideas and plan your essay. You may wish to consider the following as you think critically about the task:

Strengths and weaknesses of the three given perspectives

- What insights do they offer, and what do they fail to consider?
- Why might they be persuasive to others, or why might they fail to persuade?

Your own knowledge, experience, and values

- What is your perspective on this issue, and what are its strengths and weaknesses?
- How will you support your perspective in your essay?

The Writing prompt describes a complex issue with no definite solution. These issues typically relate to modern culture, society, politics, or economics.

There are three perspectives on the issue. Each perspective has a particular concern or interest. Usually, each perspective will offer a solution that benefits its interest.

“Essay Task” describes what you are supposed to achieve with your essay. Each bullet point relates to one of the four Writing subscores:

- Ideas & Analysis
- Development & Support
- Organization
- Language Use & Conventions

Under “Planning Your Essay,” there are some important considerations for your analysis of the perspectives.

Note that the perspectives in the prompt are only opinions, so they may have flaws and weaknesses.

You are also asked to consider your own knowledge of the issue.

## Working Through the Writing Test

There are five main steps to writing your ACT essay:

- Analyzing the Issue
- Assessing the Perspectives
- Planning & Outlining
- Writing
- Reviewing & Editing

The following modules will focus on each of these steps.

Do not rush to begin writing.

Carefully read the prompt and consider each perspective. Also take the time to plan and outline your essay. Make sure you have a strong sense of your thesis and arguments. This will ensure that you can work quickly and efficiently as you write.

If you rush, you are likely to write a rambling, unfocused essay.

Save a minute or two to review.

When you are finished writing, look back over your essay and try to spot any minor errors you can correct. It's important to manage your time to eliminate obvious errors.

☐ Allocating Your Time

<b>Analyzing the Issue</b>	Read the issue in the prompt and brainstorm relevant topics about which you are knowledgeable.	2-3 minutes
<b>Assessing the Perspectives</b>	Read the three perspectives and consider how they relate to the issue and each other.  Assess the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective.  Decide on a perspective you will defend or develop an original perspective.	3-5 minutes
<b>Planning &amp; Outlining</b>	Choose to use the “Paragraph per Perspective” or “Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis” model.  Develop an outline that plans what examples you will use to support your argument and how you will discuss each of the three perspectives in the prompt.	3-6 minutes
<b>Writing</b>	Write your essay.  Pay attention to how much time you have remaining and adjust the depth of your analysis accordingly.	25-30 minutes
<b>Reviewing &amp; Editing</b>	Quickly look back over your essay for any errors or weaknesses. Correct spelling or grammar mistakes, and make quick improvements.	1-2 minutes