

## Block **1**

# ACT Overview in 20 Minutes

In a nutshell, the ACT is designed to test what you learned in high school (or secondary school if you're outside the United States) and how well you can apply critical thinking and analysis skills to what you read — or numerical problems in the case of the math test. Your score on the ACT helps admissions folks at colleges and universities understand how well prepared you are for college-level work.

Of course, it's more than a little weird to judge everything you learned over about four years into about four hours. But that's the task before you, and you give yourself an advantage if you have some idea of what to expect on the ACT.

In this block, you get the facts about signing up for the test, including how to request accommodations if you're eligible. You find out what to bring, what rules you have to follow during the exam, and some basics about the ACT format. You also find pointers about understanding your score and what to do if you didn't score as well as you'd hoped.

## Registering for the ACT

If your school has a day when all students take the ACT, the school probably takes care of your registration for you.

However, if you want or need to take the SAT on your own, you need to know when you want to take the test and plan far in advance if you need to request accommodations for a learning disability, English learner accommodations, or a fee waiver. You must have certain details and documentation ready when you register, so read on to find out how to make all this paperwork go smoothly.

## Choosing when to take the test

Currently, the ACT is offered at testing sites nationwide and internationally on weekends every February, April, June, July, September, October, and December. Additionally, some school districts offer the ACT during the school day in March, April, October, and November, depending on the high school. If you live in a district that offers one of these schoolday tests, your test date is set for you, but all other options allow for a little freedom of choice.

The best time to take the ACT is not a one-size-fits-all consideration. You may want to wait to take the test until you feel most prepared, but you also need to give yourself plenty of time to retake the test before you apply to college. Most colleges don't require you to send the scores from every time you take the ACT, so you don't necessarily have to be completely prepared before you take your first official test. Also, many colleges allow you to superscore your ACT scores, which means they'll consider only your highest English, math, reading, and science scores from all the times you take the ACT. In fact, the ACT even creates a superscore score report if you take the test more than once. Therefore, there's not a major downside to taking the test sooner rather than later.

Generally, if you've taken algebra II and trigonometry during your sophomore year, we suggest that you consider taking your first ACT test in the first semester of your junior year in either September, October, or December. (If you're taking algebra II and trig during your junior year, you may want to wait until February or April of your junior year to take the first test.) The beauty of testing in the fall of your junior year is that you can devote the summer before to extensive ACT study.



TIP

A perk of taking the December test is that it offers Test Information Release (TIR), which means you can pay extra to get a copy of your test questions and a report of the ones you answered correctly and incorrectly. This valuable information can come in handy when preparing for subsequent tests. This service is also available for the April and June exams.

If you take the test in the fall, you have plenty of options to retake the ACT in the spring and summer to achieve your top score. You can even get some extra summer study time in during the summer before your senior year and take the September ACT. Your scores from this test should be available in plenty of time before the earliest application deadlines in October and November. If you postpone taking your first ACT until April or June of your junior year, you may not have enough retakes to optimize your score.

Table 1-1 summarizes these scenarios to help you choose when to take the ACT.

**TABLE 1-1** When to Take the ACT

If You Take Algebra II and Trig at This Time	Then Take Your First ACT at This Time	Pros	Cons
Sophomore year	Fall of junior year	Time to study over the summer and more time to improve your score	None
Junior year	Spring of junior year	Better prepared for the math test	Less time overall to improve your overall score

## Deciding whether to take the writing test

The ACT provides an optional Writing Test in addition to the other four multiple-choice sections. Its importance in the college application process is dwindling, and most colleges don't require or even recommend it. If you need to write the essay to enhance your application, make sure you present your best effort, as explained in Block 2.

## Asking for accommodations or English learner supports

Not everyone takes the ACT under the same conditions. You may have a special circumstance that can allow you to change the date of the ACT or the way you take your exam. Here are a few of the special circumstances that may affect how you take the ACT:

- » **Learning disabilities:** If you have a diagnosed learning disability (LD), you may be able to get special accommodations, such as more time to take the test. However, you must specifically request such accommodations way in advance. Prepare your requests for fall tests by the prior June and for spring tests by the prior September. Please note that in order to be eligible for special testing on the ACT, your LD must have been diagnosed by a professional, and you should have a current individualized education plan at school that includes extended test time. Talk to your counselor for more information. Note that you can only request special accommodations in conjunction with a test registration.
- » **Physical disabilities:** If you have a physical disability, you may be able to take a test in a special format — in Braille, large print, or on audio. Go to the official ACT website ([www.act.org](http://www.act.org)) for complete information about special testing.
- » **Religious obligations:** If your religion prohibits you from taking a test on a Saturday, you may test on an alternate date. The ACT registration website specifies dates and locations in each state.
- » **Military duty:** If you're an active military person, you don't complete the normal ACT registration form. Instead, ask your Educational Services Officer about testing through DANTEs (Defense Activity for Nontraditional Educational Support).
- » **English language learner:** In the United States, if you aren't proficient in English, the ACT enables you to apply for English learner supports. Because these supports expire yearly, you have to apply for the accommodation each year you take the ACT. English language learners must submit documentation of their status, such as WIDA or TOEFL scores or an official accommodations plan. If your request for English language learner supports is approved, you may be eligible for extended time, a word-to-word dictionary, directions in your native language, or small group testing. The ACT registration website explains how to apply for these accommodations and provides more details.

## Requesting a fee waiver

In the United States, Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories, you can request a fee waiver. The fee waiver means you don't have the pay to take the ACT, which currently costs about \$60 to \$85, depending on whether you take the optional writing test. Your school counselor can help you understand whether you're eligible or you can read the information at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org). If you qualify, you can take the ACT up to four times for free and receive free learning resources. You'll receive a fee waiver code that you enter when you sign up for the test.

## Signing up for your test

To register for the ACT, you need about 30 minutes and the following items:

- » A computer with Internet access
- » Credit card or other payment
- » High school course information
- » Headshot photo



REMEMBER

If you need accommodations, English learner supports, or a fee waiver, read those earlier sections before you register so you get the resources you're entitled to.

When you're ready, go to [www.act.org](http://www.act.org). Choose Start Your Journey Here → Take the SAT as shown in Figure 1-1. You need to create an account or sign in and then follow the prompts online to register.

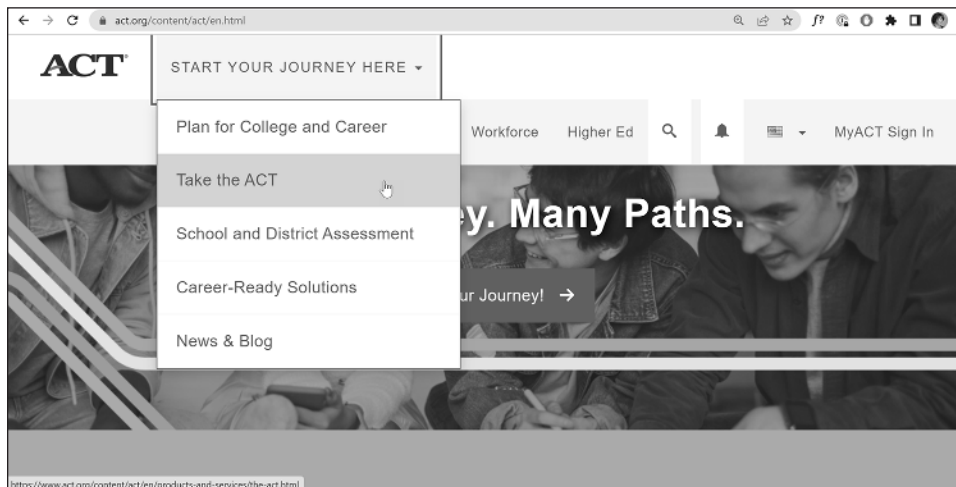


FIGURE 1-1:  
Signing up  
for the ACT  
online.

## Identifying What to Bring to the Test

If you can't borrow the brain of that whiz kid in your calculus class for the day, you're stuck using your own. To compensate, be sure that you have the following with you before you leave for the ACT test center:

- » **Admission ticket:** You receive your ticket immediately after you register online. Be sure to print it out so you have it for test day.
- » **Pencils:** If you take the ACT in the United States, the ACT is a paper test. Take a bunch of sharpened No. 2 pencils with you. You may also want to take good erasers (nothing personal — everyone makes mistakes). Mechanical pencils aren't allowed.
- » **Map or directions:** Go to the test center a few days before the actual exam to scope out your driving route and parking area. Often, the ACT is given at high schools or colleges that have parking lots far, far away from the test rooms. Drive to the location a few days in advance, park your car, and see just how long it takes you to get to the room. You don't need the stress of having to run to the test room at the last minute on test day.

- » **Clothing:** Schools that host the ACT often turn off the heat for the weekend (the ACT is usually offered on a Saturday), and the test room can be freezing cold. Alternately, in the summer, schools turn off the air conditioning, making the room boiling hot. Dress in layers and be prepared for anything.
- » **Photo ID:** Showing the birthmark your boyfriend or girlfriend thinks is so cute isn't going to cut it with the test proctor. You need to upload a photo when you register for the test and bring a photo ID (student ID, driver's license, passport, military ID, FBI Most Wanted mug shot, whatever) to the exam. If you don't have a photo ID, you can bring a letter of identification. The form is available on the official ACT website ([act.org](http://act.org)).
- » **Eyeglasses:** Students taking the ACT frequently forget their reading glasses at home and then squint for the four long hours of the test. The ACT is enough of a headache on its own; you don't need eyestrain, as well. If you wear contacts, be sure to bring cleaning/wetting solution in case you have to take the lenses out and reinsert them during the break. (Hey, all those tears can really mess up your lenses!)
- » **Snack:** True, you get only one 10-minute break between the Math and Reading Tests, but that's enough time to gobble down something to jump-start your brain. We often suggest taking an energy bar or some peanuts, something with protein and carbohydrates. Scarfing down a candy bar is actually counterproductive; your sugar levels rise only momentarily and then drop down below where they were before you had your chocolate fix.
- » **Watch:** Keeping track of time on your own timepiece is more efficient than wasting precious seconds seeking out the clock on the testing site wall. Place your watch on the desk where you can refer to it easily throughout the exam. Digital watches or smartwatches may not be allowed. Stick with ones that have faces and hands. Your watch can't make any sounds either. If the proctor hears so much as a beep from your watch, she will not-so-politely request that you leave the building and cancel your test.
- » **Calculator:** The ACT gurus allow you to use a calculator only on the Mathematics Test. Although the ACT information bulletin has an entire quarter page detailing which calculators you can and cannot use, generally, you can use any calculator (yes, even a graphing calculator) as long as it doesn't make a noise or have a computer algebra system. Make sure the one you bring has at least a square root function and, ideally, basic trigonometry functions. You may not use a laptop computer (don't laugh; you'd be surprised by how many students want to bring one to the test!).

## Knowing What to Expect During the Test

Have you ever been so excited about something only to watch all those expectations melt into a big puddle of disappointment? This is how our friend's daughter felt when her significant other broke up with her right before prom. (But she ended up having a great time after all!) Expectations are often a great setup for disappointment, but when you're taking the ACT, having some expectations is helpful. You'll know what you're getting yourself into.

This section helps you understand the exam room rules; the order, topics, and time for each test; and what the ACT thinks you should know to be prepared for college.

## Exam room rules

The ACT is pretty strict about what is and isn't allowed in the exam room. Do not, we repeat *do not*, take any of the following items with you to the ACT test room:

- » **Cellphones and other electronic devices:** Leave your cellphone in the car. You aren't allowed to bring it into the test room. One student we know was dismissed from the test because he accidentally left his cellphone in his pocket, and it rang during the exam. The same goes for other electronics, such as iPads, PC tablets, or anything else that can access the Internet or make a sound.
- » **Books and notes:** Take it from us: Last-minute studying doesn't do much good. So leave all your books at home; you aren't allowed to take them into the test room with you. (Just be sure to fill your parents in on this rule. We once had a student whose mother drove all the way to the test center with her daughter's ACT prep book, thinking the girl needed it for the test. The mom actually pulled the girl out of the test to give her the book, resulting in the girl's nearly being disqualified from the test.)
- » **Scratch paper:** You may not bring your own scratch paper to the paper-based test, and you don't receive any scratch paper during the exam. Fortunately, the exam booklet has plenty of blank space on which you can do your calculations.

When you're done with one test, know that you're done. You can't go back to a previous section and finish work there or change some of your answers. If you try to do so, the proctor will catch you and you'll be in a world of hurt.

One last rule that you should already know: Cheating on the ACT is a loser's game — it's just plain stupid. Apart from the legal, moral, and ethical questions, you can't predict what types of grammatical mistakes will show up in the questions; what are you going to do, copy a textbook on the palm of your hand? All the math formulas that you need can't fit onto the bottom of your shoe.

## The order, topics, and time for each section

The ACT is actually four tests in one — or five in one if you take the optional writing test. The test for each subject follows the same order, and you can expect to see a certain number of questions, certain topics, and have a certain amount of time for each test. Table 1-2 gives you the bird's-eye view of what to expect in each section of the ACT.

**TABLE 1-2** ACT Breakdown by Section

Test	Number of Questions	What They're About	Time Allotted
English	75	Most are about English usage and mechanics.  About 15% ask you to identify and eliminate redundant language.  About 25% ask about writing skills like organization, style, and strategy	45 minutes
Mathematics	60	About one-third of the questions are arithmetic, one-third are algebra, and one-third are geometry.	60 minutes

Test	Number of Questions	What They're About	Time Allotted
Reading	40	You will read 4 passages, which include 1 passage and 10 questions for each of the following topics:  literary narrative  social studies  humanities  natural sciences	35 minutes
Science	40	You will read 6 passages and answer 6-7 questions per passage.  2-3 passages about data representation  2-3 passages about research summaries  1 passage about conflicting viewpoints	35 minutes
Writing (optional)	1	Your ability to state, analyze, and evaluate the perspectives given as well as your own, using relevant supporting details. Throughout your essay, you should organize your ideas, maintain focus, and communicate your ideas clearly.	40 minutes

If you add up the numbers, you find that you have 216 multiple-choice questions to answer in 215 minutes; 215 minutes is 3 hours and 35 minutes, or just over 3.5 hours. You get one 10-minute break between the second and third tests (the Mathematics and Reading Tests). You may also encounter an extra 20-minute section after the Science Test that the ACT will use to determine the difficulty of questions for later exams. If you choose not to take the optional Writing Test, you get to walk out right after that. If you include the time in the classroom spent giving out the tests, explaining the directions, checking IDs, answering the Interest Inventory questions, and so on, your whole morning is shot. You may as well figure on giving up 4 to 4.5 hours for this test.

## What the ACT expects you to know

The ACT tests the following subjects:

- » **English:** The ACT expects you to know the fundamentals of grammar, usage, punctuation, diction, and rhetorical skills. For example, you must understand sentence construction — what makes a run-on and what makes a fragment. You need to know how to distinguish between commonly confused words, like *affect* and *effect* or *principal* and *principle*. You must be able to use the proper forms of words, distinguishing between an adjective and an adverb, and you must know the difference between a comma and a semicolon. Block 2 addresses the English portion of the test.
- » **Mathematics:** The ACT requires basic skills in arithmetic, geometry, and algebra. If you've had two semesters of algebra, two semesters of geometry, and a general math background, you have the math you need to answer about 90 percent of the questions. The ACT also tests algebra II and trigonometry. Oh, and you don't have to know calculus. The ACT has no calculus questions. Happy day! Refer to Block 2 for more.
- » **Reading:** The ACT expects you to be able to read a passage in a relatively short amount of time and answer questions based on it. Although you probably don't have time to significantly improve your reading skills before you take the ACT, you can still improve your ACT Reading score. Block 2 shows you a few tricks you can use to improve your speed and tells you how to recognize and avoid traps built into the questions.

## THE COMPUTER-BASED ACT

If you take the ACT in a country other than the United States, your exam is offered on computer rather than on paper. This computerized option has been available for several years and may become more common at testing sites in the United States.

The question types, numbers of questions, and scores are the same whether you take the paper or computer-based version of the ACT; the only difference is in the method of delivery. The computer-based ACT, or CBT, provides handy tools that allow you to approach it in much the same way you would for the paper test:

- **Highlighter and line reader:** Use these tools to focus on important data and sentences.
- **Answer eliminator and masker:** Use these tools to help you mark out wrong answers.
- **Magnifier:** This tool allows you to read the fine print for charts and graphs in the science questions.

You also have a timer to keep track of your time and the ability to move between questions and mark them for later review.

The ACT had plans to expand the digital version of the ACT and make it more widely available throughout the United States, but those plans have been delayed indefinitely.

» **Science:** You don't have to have much specific science background to ace the Science Test. The passages may test chemistry, biology, botany, physics, or any other science, but you don't have to have had those courses. The test gives you all the information you need to answer most of the science questions in the passages, diagrams, charts, and tables. Head to Block 2 for more about the Science Test.

» **Writing (optional):** The ACT folks added this optional section to test your writing ability. Don't worry! You've been writing for years, and the ACT people know that you can't possibly write a perfect essay in a measly 40 minutes. They're not focusing on perfection; instead, they're looking at your thesis, organization, and ability to support your thoughts. The ACT doesn't require you to write the essay, and few colleges require or even recommend the essay. The essay portion of the ACT may be eliminated from the test entirely in future administrations. Block 2 gives you the lowdown on the Writing portion of the ACT.

## Identifying Strategies for Test-Taking Success

On the wall of our office, we have a padded cushion that's imprinted with the words, "BANG HEAD HERE!" We've found that most of our students use it either to reduce stress or express their exasperation over careless mistakes. To avoid becoming a head-banger, read the material in this section about how to relax and avoid common mistakes.

### Managing your time

Every section on the ACT begins with directions and a line that tells you exactly how many questions are in the section and, therefore, how many minutes you have per question. The ACT is no big mystery. You can waste a lot of time and drive yourself crazy if you keep flipping pages and

counting up how many more questions you have to do. You can do what you can do; that's all. Looking ahead and panicking are counterproductive and waste time.

The ACT contains a few incredibly hard questions. Forget about 'em. Almost no one gets them right, anyway. Every year, a ridiculously small number of students receive a score of 36, and if you get into the 30s, you're in a superelite club of only a few percent of the thousands and thousands of students who take the ACT annually. Just accept the fact that you either won't get to or can't answer a few of the hard questions and learn to live with your imperfection. If you do go quickly enough to get to the hard questions, don't waste too much time on them. See if you can use common sense to eliminate any answers. Then mark your best guess from the remaining choices.



REMEMBER

Every question counts the same in a section, whether that question is a simple  $1 + 1 = 2$  or some deadly word problem that may as well be written in Lithuanian.

## Keeping track of your answers

Suppose that you decide to postpone doing Question 11, hoping that inspiration will strike later. But now you accidentally put the answer to Question 12 in the blank for Question 11 . . . and mess up all the numbers from that point on. After you answer Question 40, you suddenly realize that you just filled in Bubble Number 39 and have one bubble left — *aaargh!*



TIP

To avoid having to re-answer all the questions, thank your lucky stars that you bought this book and took the following advice: When you choose an answer, *circle that answer in your test booklet first* and *then* fill in the answer on the answer grid. Doing so takes you a mere nanosecond and helps you not only in this panic situation but also as you go back and double-check your work. If you have a good eraser with you (and you should), the wrong answers on the answer grid should take only a few seconds to erase.

## Coping with stress and anxiety

Most people are tense before a test and often feel butterflies dancing in their stomachs. The key is to use relaxation techniques that keep your mind on your test and not on your tummy. To avoid becoming paralyzed by a frustrating question during the test, we suggest that you develop and practice a relaxation plan (perhaps one that includes the techniques we describe in the following sections). At the first sign of panic, take a quick timeout. You'll either calm down enough to handle the question, or you'll get enough perspective to realize that it's just one little test question and not worth your anguish. Mark your best guess and move on. If you have time, you can revisit the question later.



TIP

Practice a quick relaxation routine in the days before you take the exam so that you know just what to do when you feel panicky on test day. Here are some suggestions:

- » **Inhale deeply.** Restore the steady flow of oxygen to your brain by inhaling deeply. Feel the air go all the way down to your toes. Hold it and then let it all out slowly. Repeat this process again several times.
- » **Stretch a little.** Scan your body for muscle tension and stretch these areas to get the blood flowing. You can shrug your shoulders toward your ears, roll your head slowly in a circle, stretch your arms over your head.
- » **Think positive thoughts.** Any time you notice yourself thinking negative thoughts, make a conscious effort to change the script. For example, "I got most of this math right; no sense worrying now. Overall, I think I'm doing great!"

## Eliminating answers

Facing a set of four answer choices in the hope that the correct one will reveal itself can be daunting. Instead of searching for the one correct answer in the bunch, focus on wrong answers. You'll usually have an easier time finding something wrong with an answer. The key is to reject choices based on careful analysis rather than a gut feeling.

Usually, two of the four (or for math questions, three of the five) answer choices will be relatively easy to identify as wrong. They will obviously be off topic or contain specific information that the passages or questions don't address. When you're deliberating between the two remaining options, look for problems with one of the answers. Sometimes just one word will make the answer incorrect. The correct answer is the one left standing after you've found problems with the others.

## Reading actively to stay focused

When you're in the middle of an excruciatingly boring reading passage, the worst thing you can do is let your mind drift off to a more pleasant time. Even if you have to pinch yourself to keep from falling asleep or flaking out, stay focused. A less painful option is writing a keyword next to each paragraph in the passage so you're reading actively. For example, if a paragraph is about lab test results, you might write keyword or phrase that reflects the findings.

## Reviewing your responses

Mark in your test booklet questions you're unsure about as you work through a section. If you finish a test early, go back and double-check the *easy* and *medium* marked questions. Don't spend more time trying to do the hard questions. If a question was too time-consuming for you five minutes ago, it's probably still not worth your time. If you made a totally careless or dumb mistake on an easy question, however, reviewing the problem gives you a chance to catch and correct your error. You're more likely to gain points by double-checking easy questions than by staring open-mouthed at the hard ones.



REMEMBER

Every question counts the same. A point you save by catching a careless mistake is just as valuable as a point you earn, grunting and sweating, by solving a mondo-hard problem.

# Understanding Your Score

As a future ACT test-taker and current reader of this book, we're guessing you care very much about your score. This section explains how individual questions are scored, your ACT score report, and what you need to know about repeating the test to improve your score.

## Guessing for points to maximize your score

Scoring on the ACT is very straightforward:

- » You get one point for every answer you get right.
- » You get zero points for every answer you omit.
- » You get zero points for every answer you get wrong.

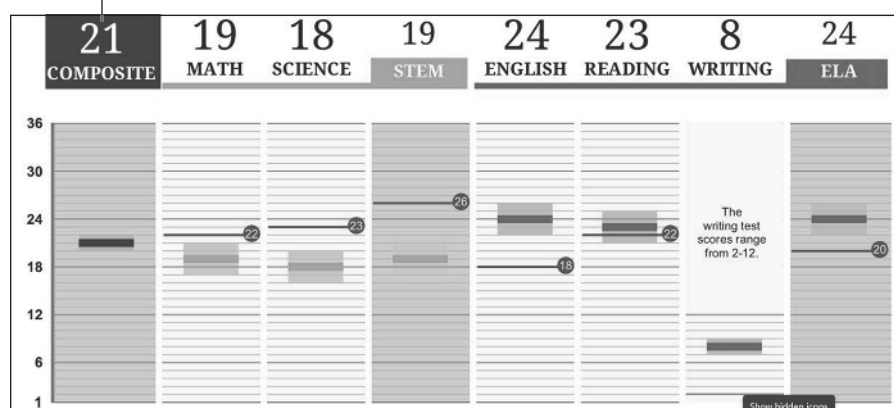


The ACT doesn't penalize you for wrong answers. Therefore, guessing on the ACT obviously works to your advantage. Never leave any question blank. We suggest that you save a couple of seconds at the end of each section just to go through the test and make sure that you've filled in an answer for every single question.

## Interpreting your overall score

We once had a frustrated student tell us that the scores on the ACT looked a lot like measurements to him: 34, 29, 36. However, the ACT has four scores, which makes for a very strange set of measurements! The ACT scores are nothing like high school scores based on percentages. They're not even like the familiar SAT scores that range from 200 to 800. Instead, they range from 1 to 36. You can see an example score report in Figure 1-2.

Average of Math, Science, English, and Reading scores



**FIGURE 1-2:** An example ACT score report.

Scoring on the ACT works like this:

- » Each required test (English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science) receives a *scaled score* between 1 (low) and 36 (high).
- » The *composite score* is the average of the four required test-scaled scores.
- » If you take the ACT Plus Writing (which is the official title for the ACT with the optional Writing Test), you receive a Writing score that ranges from 2 (low) to 12 (high). The score is the sum of the average of each of the four subscores you receive from each of the two people who grade your essay. The Writing Test score is completely separate from your composite ACT score.
- » You may see additional readiness indicators that colleges will see but that aren't combined in any way with your ACT composite. Here's a quick look at what they mean:
  - A STEM Score represents overall performance on the math and science sections.
  - An English Language Arts Score combines your performance on the English, Reading, and Writing Tests.
  - The Progress Toward Career Readiness Indicator measures your progress toward career readiness for a variety of careers.
  - The Understanding Complex Texts indicator tells you whether you're sufficiently understanding text material for college and career level reading.

» A *percentile score* tells you where you rank in your state and nationwide.

Look at the percentiles. Just knowing that you got a 26 doesn't tell you much. You need to know whether a 26 is in the 50th percentile, the 75th percentile, or the 99th percentile. If you get a 36, you have documented lifetime bragging rights because that's a perfect score!

To see a complete sample score report, visit the ACT website ([www.act.org](http://www.act.org)). The sample shows you what all these scores look like when you and your colleges of choice receive them.

## Repeating the test to improve your score

Are you allowed to repeat the ACT? Yes. Should you repeat the ACT? Probably. Other than the additional cost (both financial and emotional) required to test again, there is no real downside to retesting. Decide whether you want to repeat the ACT based on your answers to the following questions:

- » **What errors did I make the first time around?** If your mistakes were from a lack of knowledge, that is, you just plain didn't know a grammar rule or a math formula, you can easily correct those mistakes with studying.
- » **Why do I want to repeat the test?** Is your ego destroyed because your best friend got a better score than you did? That's probably not a good enough reason to retake the ACT. Do retake the exam if you're trying to get a minimum qualifying score to enable you to get into a college or earn a scholarship.
- » **Can I go through this all over again?** How seriously did you take studying the first time around? If you gave it all you had, you may be too burned out to go through the whole process again. On the other hand, if you just zoomed through the test booklet and didn't spend much time preparing for the test, you may want a second chance to show your stuff.
- » **Were my mistakes caused by factors that were not my fault?** Maybe you were in a fender-bender on your way to the exam, or perhaps you stayed up late the night before in an argument with your parents or your best friend. If you just weren't up to par when you took the exam, definitely take it again, and this time be sure to get a good night's sleep the night before.

If you take the ACT in a national administration in April, June, or December, you can pay to see a digital copy of your full ACT test and the questions you missed. This handy resource gives you valuable information to study for a future test. The cost for this Test Information Release (TIR) is \$30 when you register for the test, and access to the test questions is available as soon as you receive your scores for that ACT test date. You can order TIR after you receive your scores, but it'll cost you \$40. This service is only available for April, June, or December test dates in the United States. This feature isn't offered for international administrations of the test.

The ACT doesn't automatically send colleges the scores for every time you take the test. It gives you the option of deciding which set of scores you want colleges to see. If you don't want to report the results of all your tests, keep these issues in mind:

- » **The ACT automatically sends scores to the colleges you list on your test registration form.** If you want to wait until after you see your report to decide whether certain colleges can see your scores for a particular test administration, don't list those colleges with your ACT registration.

- » **Many colleges figure your ACT composite score by averaging the highest scores you get in each section across all administrations of the test.** They refer to this practice as *superscoring* the ACT. If you get a 24 in English, a 21 in Math, a 23 in Reading, and a 25 in Science the first time you take the ACT and a 25, 20, 24, and 24, respectively, the second time, these colleges will figure your composite score by averaging your higher 25 English score, 21 Math score, 24 Reading score, and 25 Science score. Your composite score for each administration would be 23, but the composite score the colleges calculate would be 24. Therefore, you may want the colleges to get reports from all the times you take the ACT so that they can superscore your highest section scores. When the ACT institutes section retesting and the superscore report, your highest section scores will appear on one report, and (if colleges allow), you'll only have to send (and pay for) one report.
- » **A handful of colleges require you to report your scores from every test date.** Check with the admissions committee at the colleges to which you're applying to make sure they allow you to withhold score reports from particular test dates.



REMEMBER

A growing number of colleges allow you to self-report your ACT scores. Those colleges consider the ACT scores you list on your college applications or report within the college's online portal, depending on the policies of the individual school, to make admissions decisions. You only send an official score report after you've been admitted to and have decided to attend that particular college. Self-reporting allows you to save the money you'd have spent to send official score reports to every college on your application list. If you're able to take advantage of the self-reporting option, be sure to follow the college's procedures exactly and report your scores accurately. A discrepancy between the scores you report on your application and the scores that appear on your official report could be grounds for rescinding your college acceptance.

