**Strategies to Improve Your ACT Scores in Math**

1. Know what’s on the test! To get a 22, which is the Benchmark score, you need to get 34-35 correct. Each question is worth 1 point each.

**About:** 33 Algebra, 23 Geometry and 4 Trigonometry Questions

Subscore 1: Pre-Algebra/Elementary Algebra

* **Pre-Algebra (20-25%).** Questions in this content area are based on basic operations using whole numbers, decimals, fractions, and integers; place value; square roots and approximations; the concept of exponents; scientific notation; factors; ratio, proportion, and percent; linear equations in one variable; absolute value and ordering numbers by value; elementary counting techniques and simple probability; data collection, representation, and interpretation; and understanding simple descriptive statistics.
* **Elementary Algebra (15-20%).** Questions in this content area are based on properties of exponents and square roots, evaluation of algebraic expressions through substitution, using variables to express functional relationships, understanding algebraic operations, and the solution of quadratic equations by factoring.
* Subscore 2: Intermediate Algebra/Coordinate Geometry **Intermediate Algebra (15-20%).** Questions in this content area are based on an understanding of the quadratic formula, rational and radical expressions, absolute value equations and inequalities, sequences and patterns, systems of equations, quadratic inequalities, functions, modeling, matrices, roots of polynomials, and complex numbers.
* **Coordinate Geometry (15-20%).** Questions in this content area are based on graphing and the relations between equations and graphs, including points, lines, polynomials, circles, and other curves; graphing inequalities; slope; parallel and perpendicular lines; distance; midpoints; and conics.

Subscore 3: Plane Geometry/Trigonometry

* **Plane Geometry (20-25%).** Questions in this content area are based on the properties and relations of plane figures, including angles and relations among perpendicular and parallel lines; properties of circles, triangles, rectangles, parallelograms, and trapezoids; transformations; the concept of proof and proof techniques; volume; and applications of geometry to three dimensions.
* **Trigonometry (5-10%).** Questions in this content area are based on understanding trigonometric relations in right triangles; values and properties of trigonometric functions; graphing trigonometric functions; modeling using trigonometric functions; use of trigonometric identities; and solving trigonometric equations.

1. Memorize the formulas!

ACT will not provide you with a formula sheet. See attached list of formulas.

1. Let the answers help you!

The focus is not on HOW you got the answer, as with many other tests. Use the answers to your advantage. With Algebra especially, you can just plug in the answer choices for the variable instead of working out the entire problem to solve it.

1. Watch out for the time!

You only have 60 minutes to answer 60 questions. That’s 1 minute per question. If you spend more than a minute on a tougher question, you will miss out on the opportunity to answer MORE questions that are easier. In the final minutes, go through and make a good guess on all other questions. Remember, you are not penalized for WRONG answers so don’t leave anything blank. Guessing wisely, especially during the first 20 questions (these are usually the easiest), will help you pick up a few additional points. Try confidently ruling out a few choices and then guessing with the remainder of the choices.

1. Take 2!

Take two passes over the test. This will help you maximize the number of questions you can answer with confidence that they are correct and will save you time. Know which questions to skip in the first PASS, like those that are very long and wordy or that don’t seem to make sense even after you have read them twice. Watch those with long complicated numbers or that require difficult calculations to solve on the first PASS.

PASS 1: Start with the first question and move forward answering questions that look relatively easy and quick and jump over those that look difficult or time consuming.

PASS 2: After you answer all the quick and easy questions, circle back to your first skipped problem and work your way to the end. Remember GUESS particularly wisely on any questions from 1-20 as they are typically the easiest.

**Strategies to Improve Your ACT Scores in Science**

1. Know what’s on the test! To get a 23, which is the Benchmark score, you need to get 27-28 correct. Each question is worth 1 point each. You will have 40 questions to complete in 35 minutes.

The test presents several sets of scientific information, each followed by a number of multiple-choice test questions. The scientific information is conveyed in one of three different formats:

* data representation (graphs, tables, and other schematic forms)
* research summaries (descriptions of several related experiments)
* conflicting viewpoints (expressions of several related hypotheses or views that are inconsistent with one another)

The questions require you to:

* recognize and understand the basic features of, and concepts related to, the provided information
* examine critically the relationship between the information provided and the conclusions drawn or hypotheses developed
* generalize from given information to gain new information, draw conclusions, or make predictions

1. Read Passages with DATA Representations First!

There are 3 different types of passages:

1. Data Representation

**Data Representation (30-40%).** This format presents graphic and tabular material similar to that found in science journals and texts. The questions associated with this format measure skills such as graph reading, interpretation of scatterplots, and interpretation of information presented in tables.

1. Conflicting Viewpoints

**Conflicting Viewpoints (15-20%).** This format presents expressions of several hypotheses or views that, being based on differing premises or on incomplete data, are inconsistent with one another. The questions focus on the understanding, analysis, and comparison of alternative viewpoints or hypotheses.

1. Research Summaries

**Research Summaries (45-55%).** This format provides descriptions of one or more related experiments. The questions focus upon the design of experiments and the interpretation of experimental results.

Data Representations are the easiest because they require the least amount of reading. You will have to interpret coordinating graphs, draw inferences from graphs and analyze diagrams and figures. Remember, if you see a lot of paragraphs and writing it is NOT a Data Representation Passage. You are looking for charts and graphs.

1. Take Short Notes on the Conflicting Viewpoints Passages!

When you have these passages, you can get lost in the terminology or words. So right when you start reading take short notes in simple language on the side of the paragraph. Summarize what each theorists is saying. Make a list of key components of each. In other words SUMMARIZE as you go. These passages usually have 7 questions. Because there are more questions than on the Research Passages, do this section after the DATA Representation Passages.

1. Watch your time!

Don’t spend more than 5 minutes on a passage and remember when time is almost up GUESS! Read the passage first very quickly. Don’t focus so much on the details at this point. Then read the first question and make sure you KNOW what it is asking. Then refer to the passage to identify and clarify the correct answer.

**Strategies to Improve Your ACT Scores in Reading**

1. Know what’s on the test! To get a 22 which is the Benchmark score, you need to get 24 correct. Each question is worth 1 point each. You will have 40 questions to complete in 35 minutes.

You're asked to read several passages and answer questions that show your understanding of:

* what is directly stated
* statements with implied meanings

Specifically, you will 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
* analyze the author's or narrator's voice and method

The test comprises four sections, each containing one long or two shorter prose passages that are representative of the level and type of reading required in first-year college courses. Passages on topics in social studies, natural sciences, literary narrative (including prose fiction), and the humanities are included.

1. Read the easiest passages first!

There are four passages in this order:

1. Prose Fiction

**Literary Narrative (25%) or Prose Fiction (25%).** Questions in the Literary Narrative category are based on intact short stories or excerpts from short stories or novels, or passages from memoirs and personal essays. Questions in the Prose Fiction category are based on intact short stories or excerpts from short stories and novels.

1. Social Science

**Social Studies (25%).** Questions in this category are based on passages in the content areas of anthropology, archaeology, biography, business, economics, education, geography, history, political science, psychology, and sociology.

1. Humanities

**Humanities (25%).** Questions in this category are based on passages in the content areas of architecture, art, dance, ethics, film, language, literary criticism, music, philosophy, radio, television, and theater. Questions may be based on passages from memoirs and personal essays.

1. Natural Science

**Natural Sciences (25%).** Questions in this category are based on passages in the content areas of anatomy, astronomy, biology, botany, chemistry, ecology, geology, medicine, meteorology, microbiology, natural history, physiology, physics, technology, and zoology.

* **Humanities (25%).** Questions in this category are based on passages in the content areas of architecture, art, dance, ethics, film, language, literary criticism, music, philosophy, radio, television, and theater. Questions may be based on passages from memoirs and personal essays.

You don’t need to read them in this order though. Choose the passage that is easiest to read first. If you like stories, read the Prose Fiction first. If you like science, read Natural Science first, etc. You will do a better job answering questions about a passage that you are interested in.

1. Underline and Summarize!

Underline important words as you read and then write a short summary of the paragraph using only a few words. Underlining will give you a place to refer to when you answer the question so you can quickly find the parts you want as they will stand out. Summarizing will ensure that you understand what you read and will help you with the “Main Idea” types of questions quickly.

1. Cover the answers up!

Once you read the passage, relay on your memory to answer the questions by covering up the answer choices after reading the question. Try and answer the question and then match your answer with a choice. If you can’t make a match refer back to the passage.

1. Final Reading TIPS!

Read the questions first. Then read the first and last paragraph of the passage to get the GIST of what it’s about. Quickly, read, scan and skim the passage to answer the questions. Answer questions with the shortest answers possible first as you can read them quicker and compare them quicker than longer answer choices.

**Strategies to Improve Your ACT Scores in English**

Know what’s on the test! To get an 18 which is the Benchmark score, you need to get 39-41 correct. Each question is worth 1 point.

The English test is a 75-question, 45-minute test, covering:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Usage/Mechanics**   * punctuation * grammar and usage * sentence structure | **Rhetorical Skills**   * strategy * organization * style |

Six elements of effective writing are included in the English Test: punctuation, grammar and usage, sentence structure, strategy, organization, and style. The questions covering punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure make up the Usage/Mechanics subscore. The questions covering strategy, organization, and style make up the Rhetorical Skills subscore.

## Usage/Mechanics

* **Punctuation (10-15%).** Questions in this category test your knowledge of the conventions of internal and end-of-sentence punctuation, with emphasis on the relationship of punctuation to meaning (for example, avoiding ambiguity, indicating appositives).
* **Grammar and Usage (15-20%).** Questions in this category test your understanding of agreement between subject and verb, between pronoun and antecedent, and between modifiers and the word modified; verb formation; pronoun case; formation of comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs; and idiomatic usage.
* **Sentence Structure (20-25%).** Questions in this category test your understanding of relationships between and among clauses, placement of modifiers, and shifts in construction

## Rhetorical Skills

* **Strategy (15-20%).** Questions in this category test how well you develop a given topic by choosing expressions appropriate to an essay's audience and purpose; judging the effect of adding, revising, or deleting supporting material; and judging the relevance of statements in context.
* **Organization (10-15%).** Questions in this category test how well you organize ideas and choose effective opening, transitional, and closing sentences.
* **Style (15-20%).** Questions in this category test how well you select precise and appropriate words and images, maintain the level of style and tone in an essay, manage sentence elements for rhetorical effectiveness, and avoid ambiguous pronoun references, wordiness, and redundancy.

2. Apply the SOUNDS FUNNY Rule!

You can answer questions that seem harder because they cover technical grammar rules by recognizing answers that “sound funny” Trust what you hear, which sounds better, which sounds odd?

3. You don’t have to answer the questions in ORDER!

Answer the easy questions first, THEN come back on a second PASS and answer harder ones or GUESS.

4. Pay attention to “NO CHANGE” answer choices.

Don’t just rule them out, consider them. Historically, ACT includes 15-18 questions that are correct the way they are.

5.