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ACT[®] Prep 2025/2026

by Lisa Zimmer Hatch, MA, and
Scott A. Hatch, JD

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ACT® Prep 2025/2026 For Dummies®

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, www.wiley.com

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Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2024936496

ISBN 978-1-394-25830-7 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-394-25832-1 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-394-25831-4 (ebk)

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Introduction

Welcome to *ACT Prep 2025/2026 For Dummies*. This is a nondiscriminatory, equal-opportunity book. You're welcome to participate whether you're a genius or (like us) you need a recipe to make ice. Besides, the book's title is not a slam at you. You're not the dummy; the test is (and we've heard it called worse, believe us — especially on the Friday night before the exam).

The goal of this book is to show you exactly how to survive the ridiculous situation called the ACT. No matter how excellent your high school teachers are (or were), they've prepared you for the real world, a world that, alas, has very little connection to the ACT. High school teachers can give you a good foundation in grammar, reading, science, and math skills (the areas tested on the ACT), but you may want to think of them as the friendly old GPs, the general practitioners whose job it is to keep you well and handle the little day-to-day problems. What do you do when you have a crisis, like the ACT, that's making you really sick? We like to think of *ACT Prep 2025/2026 For Dummies*, as a loony but gifted specialist you can call when your situation becomes desperate.

No one wants to deal with the eccentric specialist for too terribly long. The goal of this book, just like the goal of the expert, is to come in with the Code Blue crash cart, deal with the situation, and then leave rapidly with as few lives destroyed as possible. This book has one goal: to prepare you for the ACT — period. We're not here to teach you every grammar rule ever created or every math formula that Einstein knew. We don't include any extra “filler” material to make this book look fat and impressive on bookstore shelves. If you want a thick book to use as a booster seat for the vertically challenged, go find *War and Peace*. If you're looking for something that you can use to prepare you for the ACT as quickly and painlessly as possible, again we say to you, welcome to *ACT Prep 2025/2026 For Dummies*.

About This Book

You likely can't escape the ACT. Many colleges expect (but don't require) you to take this entrance exam as a component of your application. Virtually every college accepts scores from either the ACT or the SAT. (Wiley just so happens to publish *Digital SAT Prep For Dummies* as well, should you choose to take that exam.) Many students decide to take both tests to see which one results in a better score. Is that a good idea? Absolutely. Even better, take practice tests for both (you can download a free full-length ACT from www.act.org and access eight complete SATs from www.collegeboard.org) to see which one suits you best and then concentrate on just that test.

Many colleges emphasize ACT scores to compensate for grade inflation. That is, some high schools may give you an A for doing the same level of work that would gain you a C at other high schools. Because the ACT is the same for everyone (students all over the world take the exact same exam), colleges can use the scores to get inside your head and see what's really there. Think of this test as an opportunity, not a crisis: A good ACT score may help offset a low GPA. In just a few hours one fine Saturday morning, you can make up a little for a few mishaps in school.

In *ACT Prep 2025/2026 For Dummies*, you find out what types of questions are on the exam, which questions you should work on carefully, and which ones you're better off guessing at quickly. (Good news: The ACT has no penalty for wrong answers, so guess on absolutely every question you don't know.) We also help you figure out which approach to use for each type of question, and, perhaps most importantly, we show you some traps that are built into each question style. We've been test-prep tutors for many years and have developed a list of the "gotchas" that have trapped thousands of students over the years. We show you how to avoid being trapped, too.

This book is also full of the substantive information that you need to know, including grammar rules, geometry, algebra, and arithmetic formulas. And this edition has added several math sample problems. Occasionally, we include some truly sick humor on the principle that, as you're groaning at our jokes, you won't notice that you're suffering from the questions. (Hey, as the mushroom said to his friends, "Of course, everyone likes me. I'm a fun-gi!")

Note to nontraditional students: The days of high school may be just a fading memory for you (along with your thin waistline and full head of hair). We recognize that not everyone taking the ACT is a high school junior or senior. Maybe you took a few years off to build your career or to nurture a family (or to pay your debt to society) and are now having to go back and review what you thought you had left behind years ago. It can be totally frustrating to have to deal with proper punctuation or quadratic equations all over again. Postpone your nervous breakdown. Things aren't as dismal as they look. You'll probably be surprised how quickly material comes back to you as you go through this book.

Foolish Assumptions

Although you could've picked up this book just because you have an insatiable love for English, math, reading, and science, we're betting you picked it up because you have to take the ACT. (Isn't it good to know at the outset that your authors have a remarkable grasp of the obvious?) And because we weren't born yesterday, we figure that you're taking the ACT in anticipation of applying to college. How exciting for you!

Because we've rarely met a person who actually looks forward to taking standardized entrance exams, we're lumping you into the category of "readers who are going into the ACT kicking and screaming." Okay, maybe we're being overly dramatic, but we've got a hunch that you're not especially excited about the prospect of spending four hours of precious sleeping-in time sitting in a stark classroom, darkening endless ovals on a bubble sheet under the watchful eye of a heartless proctor who continues to yell "Time!" before you've finished the section. Call us crazy!

Nevertheless, you picked up this book, so we assume that getting the best ACT score you can is important to you and that you care enough to sacrifice some of your free time to achieve that goal. Good for you!

Here are the other assumptions we've made about you while writing this book:

- » You're a high school student, and, like most high school students, you carry a full course load, participate in a number of extracurricular activities, may even have a job, and prefer to carry on a social life. Or you may have already graduated from high school and may hold down a career and tend to a family. Either way, you don't want us to waste your time with a bunch of stuff that isn't on the ACT. For instance, as much as we enjoy creating vocabulary flashcards, we don't share those with you in this book because you don't need to memorize word meanings to ace the ACT.

- » You're not all work and no play. We want to make studying for the ACT as painless as possible, so we've tried to lighten things up a bit with a few jokes. Forgive us, please. Some are really lame.
- » Because you're college-bound, you've spent some years engaged in a college-prep curriculum that includes algebra, geometry, and likely a little algebra II and trigonometry. We're pretty sure you've had your fair share of English, social studies, and science classes, and you've written an essay or two. Therefore, we don't bore you too much with the elementary stuff. (We do, however, cover the basic math and grammar concepts that you may have forgotten.)

Icons Used in This Book

Some information in this book is really, really important. We flag it by using an icon. Here's a list of the icons we use and details about what they mean:



TIP

Follow the arrow to score a bull's-eye by using the tips we highlight with this icon.



REMEMBER

Burn this stuff into your brain or carve it into your heart; it's the really important material. If you skip or ignore the Remember icons, you won't get your money's worth out of this book.



EXAMPLE

This icon marks sample problems.



WARNING

Pay heed to this advice and avoid the potential pitfall.

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this book comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet that includes tips to help you prepare for the ACT. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to www.dummies.com and type "**ACT For Dummies Cheat Sheet**" in the Search box.

You also get access to all the full-length online practice tests, more than 100 math and science flashcards, and extra resources for understanding your scores for the test (including the essay!). To gain access to the online practice, all you have to do is register. Just follow these simple steps:

1. **Register your book or ebook at Dummies.com to get your pin.**
Go to www.dummies.com/go/getaccess.
2. **Select your product from the dropdown list on that page.**
3. **Follow the prompts to validate your product, and then check your email for a confirmation message that includes your PIN and log-in instructions.**

If you don't receive this email within two hours, check your spam folder before contacting us through our Technical Support website at <http://support.wiley.com> or by phone at 877-762-2974.

Now you're ready to go! You can come back to the practice material as often as you want — simply log on with the username and password you created during your initial login. No need to enter the access code a second time.

Your registration is good for one year from the day you activate your PIN.

Where to Go from Here

You've probably heard the joke about the student who was debating whether to buy a book at the bookstore. The sales clerk, eager to make his commission, proclaims, "Buy this book — it'll do half the work for you!" The student brightens up and exclaims, "Great! I'll take two!"

As much as we wish we could simply transfer test-taking material into your brain in one dump, we realize that learning it takes effort on your part. Meet us halfway. We've done our job by showing you what to study and how to go about it; now it's your turn. We suggest two ways to use this book:

- » **Fine-tune your skills.** Maybe you're already a math whiz and just need help with the English grammar. Go right to the English review we provide in Part 2. If, on the other hand, you're a grammar guru who wouldn't know a nonagon if you met one in a dark alley, turn to the math review we offer in Part 3.
- » **Start from scratch.** Grab a sack of food and some sharpened pencils, lock yourself in your room, and go through this book word for word. Don't worry; it's not as bad as it seems. Actually, starting from scratch is the preferred method. Many students make what we call the "mediocre mistake": They're good at one section, mediocre at a second, and dismal at another. They spend all their time in their worst section and barely look at the sections that they're mediocre or good in. Big mistake! If you spend two hours studying something that's totally incomprehensible to you, you may improve your score a few points. If you spend two hours studying your mediocre material, you may improve your score by one or two points. A couple of points that you gain in your mediocre section are just as valuable as — and a heck of a lot easier to get than — the same number of points you gain in your weakest section. Humor us and read the book from cover to cover. You'll pick up some great material.

Regardless of whether you hunt and peck your way through the chapters or approach the first six parts consecutively, absolutely take the practice test in Part 7. How you choose to use the full-length practice test is entirely up to you. However, may we suggest two tried-and-true methods?

- » **Diagnostic:** Take the first practice exam to see how you score. Then devour the subject reviews and advice we provide in the first six parts of the book. Finish by taking the online practice tests to see how much your score has improved.
- » **Pure practice:** Devour the reviews and advice first and use the full-length exams (in the book and online) to practice and reinforce what you've learned in the rest of the book.

Either way, you should also get your hands on the current edition of *The Official ACT Prep Guide* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.). The eight official exams in that book give you ample opportunity to practice what you discover in *ACT Prep 2025/2026 For Dummies* so that you can walk into the test site with the test questions fresh in your brain.

After you've covered the information in this book, you may discover that you need more in-depth English or math review. Or maybe you just can't get enough of this stuff! Several Wiley publications are available to accommodate you; just search for the most recent editions. Dig more deeply into the rules of Standard English in the latest editions of *English Grammar For Dummies* and find tons of grammar practice in the *English Grammar Workbook For Dummies* both by Geraldine Woods. Those of you who are math challenged will find the latest editions of these books helpful: *ACT Math Prep For Dummies* and *Digital SAT Math Prep For Dummies* by Mark Zegarelli; *Algebra I For Dummies* and *Algebra II For Dummies* by Mary Jane Sterling; and *Geometry For Dummies* by Mark Ryan (all by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.).

Figuring Out How Long All This Studying Will Take

In the real world, you have classes, family obligations, community service projects, sports practices, work, and, if you're lucky, a social life. How on earth are you going to fit reviewing this book and studying for the ACT into your schedule? The answer is that you have to commit to this project and make it a priority. How many hours should you carve out of your schedule? Here's what we suggest.

Reading the ACT overview in the first three chapters shouldn't cut out too much of your free time, no more than 30 minutes. Other parts require more of an investment.

The five parts of the book that review English, math, writing, reading, and science contain one or more chapters that explain how to approach the subject at hand and one short chapter full of practice questions. Soaking up the information in the explanations and taking the short practice tests should take you about an hour or two per test subject.

Additionally, the English Test part features a very important grammar review that we strongly suggest you spend at least an hour or two studying. Even if you're good at grammar, this section features all sorts of persnickety grammar rules, just the type that (with your luck) you'd get caught on during the ACT. Finally, the Math Test part features a pretty comprehensive math review — number basics, geometry, algebra, coordinate geometry, and trigonometry — that should take you about three hours to fully absorb.

And don't forget the full-length practice tests, of course — one in this book and two more online. Each of the tests takes 2 hours and 55 minutes to complete (a half hour longer with the Writing Test), not including breaks. Give yourself about an hour to review the answer explanations for each exam. That should be enough time for you to review the answer explanations to every question and to take advantage of the opportunity to see shortcuts you may not have noticed or traps you luckily avoided. So, taking and reviewing each exam should take you about 4 or 5 hours. Here's the final timetable:

Activity	Time
Reading the ACT overview	30 minutes
Reviewing the approaches to the five test topics and working through the practice questions at 1.5 hours per topic	7.5 hours
Absorbing the four math review chapters at 1 hour per chapter	3 hours
Engrossing yourself in the grammar review chapter at 2 hours	2 hours

Activity	Time
Enjoying the three full-length practice exams at 4 hours per exam	12 hours
Groaning in pain at the authors' lame jokes	15 minutes
Firing off letter complaining about authors' lame jokes (or sending along better ones!)	15 minutes
TOTAL TIME	26 hours

Fear not: You don't have to do it all in a day. The last thing we advocate is sleep deprivation! This book is designed so that you can start any part at any time. You don't have to have finished the general math chapter, for example, before you go through the general reading chapter.

Okay, are you ready? Are you quivering with anticipation, living for the moment when you can pick up your yellow No. 2 pencil and hold on for the thrill of a lifetime? (Or are you thinking, "These authors need to get a life!") Listen, you're going to take the ACT anyway, so you may as well have a good time learning how to do so. Laughing while learning is the whole purpose of this book. Take a deep breath, rev up the brain cells, and go for it! Good luck. Just remember that for you, ACT can come to stand for Ace Conquers Test!

1

**Coming to Terms
with Reality: An
Overview of the
ACT**

IN THIS PART . . .

Get cozy with the format and content of the ACT and develop a checklist of the items to take with you to the exam (and leave home). Find out how your efforts will be scored and when it's a good idea to take the ACT for a second, or even third, time.

Develop a plan to beat stress during the test and learn other ways to avoid messing up your performance so that you can achieve your best possible score.

Create an effective study plan based on the amount of time you have to study for the next ACT test.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Figuring out what — and what not — to take to the ACT
- » Dealing with unusual circumstances
- » Taking a chance with dumb-luck guessing
- » Knowing what to expect on the ACT and understanding how the test's scoring works
- » Repeating the ACT if necessary

Chapter 1

Getting Your ACT Together: ACT 101

Are you the type of person who jumps into the cold water all at once instead of dipping your toe in a little at a time? If so, do we have a table for you! Table 1-1 gives you an overview of the ACT and shocks you with the entire kit and caboodle all at once.

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 ten-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 about 4 hours for this test.

You have two ACT formats to choose from: paper-based and digital. The two formats are exactly the same; just the deliveries are different. If you feel more comfortable with a test you can hold and write on with your number 2 pencil, you can opt for the paper version. If screens are your thing, the digital version 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.

TABLE 1-1 ACT Breakdown by Section

Test	Number of Questions	Time Allotted
English	75	45 minutes
Mathematics	60	60 minutes
Reading	40	35 minutes
Science	40	35 minutes
Writing (optional)	1	40 minutes

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

What to Take to the ACT

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:** 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).
- » **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 ten-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 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!).

What Not to Take to the ACT

Do not, we repeat, *do not*, take any of the following items with you to the ACT test room:

- » **Cell phones and other electronic devices:** Leave your cell phone 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 cell phone 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.

What to Do If You Have Special Circumstances

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 differences:** 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 (IEP) 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 (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).

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.



REMEMBER

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.

Your Number's Up: Scoring on the ACT

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. 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.

» 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!

» You may see additional readiness indicators. A STEM Score represents overall performance in 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 Tests indicator tells you whether you sufficiently understand text material for college and career-level reading. Colleges will see these scores, but they aren't combined in any way with your ACT composite.

The ACT website (act.org) provides a sample score report and scoring information that shows you what all these scores look like when you and your colleges of choice receive them.

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. Part 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 Part 3 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. Your reading skills are probably pretty set by now. However, this fact doesn't mean you can't improve your ACT Reading score. Chapter 13 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.

» **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 Part 5 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. Part 6 gives you the lowdown on the Writing portion of the ACT.

Repeating the Test for a Better 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 by 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.



TIP

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,