



Improvement Strategies by Sub-Score

☀ English

Score Range	Strategies	Explanations
ALL SCORES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read the passages.• On just this test – the English test – do NOT make A/F be your default choice when time is called.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Although this test doesn't test reading, it does require that you know organization of the passage. Take 1-1 ½ minutes to quickly read each passage before you start answering.• Because of score penalties for blanks, your score won't be affected by guessing, so DO NOT leave any ovals empty! On the English test, the A/F answers are the "NO CHANGE" options. Data shows that on average, only 18 out of the 75 questions will be "NO CHANGE." For English, pick B/G, C/H, or D/J for your guesses when "5 Minutes" is called.
0-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Answer the easy questions first.• Prepare yourself by getting rest and eating a good breakfast.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There's no weight for difficulty on the English test, so you don't necessarily have to answer the questions in order. Do a quick scan and find those questions you KNOW, and then go back and address the ones you don't. If you spend too much time agonizing over early difficult questions, you might miss easier ones farther into the test that you actually know.• Take care of yourself the night before and the morning of the ACT Test. Get some real sleep and eat a protein-based breakfast. TURN OFF THE VIDEO GAMES AND NO DONUTS!
13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be time aware.• Watch for the word "being" in the answer choices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Watch the amount of time you spend on a question. If you're spending more than 30 seconds on a question, mark it for answering later and move on.• ACT loves to trick test-takers with answer options that include "being that," "being as," or "being as how." These are diction questions, and answers with these options are wrong. Always go with options that include "because" or "since."
16-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know comma usage.• Beware of its and it's.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At this range, comma usage is probably the biggest problem. Make sure you know that a series or list to be separated by commas must have three or more elements. Don't separate two elements with commas. Also know that commas separating two sentences must be followed by FANBOYS conjunctions (<u>for</u>, <u>and</u>, <u>nor</u>, <u>but</u>, <u>or</u>, <u>yet</u>, <u>so</u>)• It's stands for "it is." It's is NOT possessive. Substitute "it is" for "it's" in the passage or answer. Does it make sense?
20-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't swap one mistake for another.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The ACT English test likes to test more than one skill at a time on some questions, <u>especially the ones with longer answer choices</u>. If you come across a question that seems pretty straightforward, be sure to read each answer choice carefully. <u>If the answer is not 100 per cent right, it is 100 per cent wrong</u>. Eliminate it. The test will always provide an answer that is accurate in every way. If you see a new error, don't choose it!
24-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look for the concise (short and to-the-point) answers.• Watch for – dash – questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACT is an absolute fan of conciseness, meaning the fewest number of words to get a point accurately across. If all three answer choices say basically the exact same thing, choose the one with fewest words. And if an underlined section can be eliminated completely without affecting the passage, choose to eliminate it.• 90% of all dash questions will need to have two dashes – <u>one to introduce the extra information</u> – and one to close it off.
28-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commit time to taking practice tests.• Watch transitional words between sentences and phrases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At this score range and beyond, practice tests with answer evaluations are going to improve your score the most. You can't expect to raise your score much past this level without committing to at least 3-5 hours of focused practice a week. Just wanting your score to go up isn't enough. At this level, evaluating WHY you missed a question and identifying the skill associated with that question are the keys to improvement.• Identify what's written before and after an underlined portion to assure that the correct transitional word is being used. Make sure the answer you choose doesn't change the timeline or the meaning of the questioned section of the passage.
33-36	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commit time to taking practice tests.• Focus attention to the more subtle areas of sentence structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is the Ivy League, and you can't expect to raise your score to perfect or almost perfect without committing to at least 5-7 hours of focused practice a week. At this level, you should have already identified your weakest skills, contacted your English teacher or Miss Swope (ACT Prep English), and received instruction and practice in those areas.• At this level, you can probably already identify and punctuate for sentence combining (semi-colons, commas+conjunctions, etc.), so the next step is to determine essential and non-essential information and using commas, parentheses, and dashes to punctuate it.

☀ Math

Score Range	Strategies	Explanations
ALL SCORES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Tips 	<p>Don't overuse your calculator: If you know that $2+2=4$, you don't need to waste time keying it in. Don't leave any question blank: If you have 7 questions left to answer, pick a letter and fill in those 7 questions straight down the line with it. Don't waste time on any one question: If a question is taking you too long, you are approaching it the wrong way or you may not have the necessary knowledge to answer it --- leave it to revisit later or make a guess. Be familiar with your calculator and its functions. Back solve by plugging in numbers if you are stuck on how to start a problem. If you are in a higher score range, don't show your work --- just focus on speed and get the answer, but if you are in a lower score range, it is best to show yourself your work to be sure you don't miss any steps.</p>
0-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skip the Most Difficult Math Questions 	<p>Take your time on the first portion of the test. The questions get progressively more difficult throughout the test (#1 is easiest and #60 is hardest), so focus on getting the easy ones right. To get to the next score range (13-15), you need to answer at least 10 of the 60 questions correctly. Instead of hurrying to work all 60 questions, spend more time on the easy/medium questions at the beginning of the section. And remember, just because you may not get to work on or look at all 60 questions and have to guess on those last few, you still need to fill in ALL of the bubbles - pick a letter and fill it in straight down when you have a couple of minutes left in the test!</p>
13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't Skip Steps 	<p>Even some of the easiest questions will require you to go through several steps to get to the correct answer. Do like your math teacher says and show your work to be sure that you are not skipping any of the necessary steps for a question. It may even be helpful to work backward from the answer choices by plugging in numbers when you are not sure how to approach a question. Also, underline what the question is asking. The ACT will always give you an answer choice that is correct if you solved for the wrong aspect of the question or if you misread the question. Take your time on the first 40 questions to make sure you are going through all the necessary steps to answer the question being asked. If you don't make it past the first 40 because you are being thorough, that is okay! Just be sure you make a guess on the rest of the questions, too.</p>
16-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorize Formulas 	<p>Unfortunately, the ACT does not supply you with any of the formulas you need to know on the test (there are about 30 of them), so your brain needs to supply them to you from memorization. Search online for "ACT Math Formulas" and take your pick from the many cheat sheets out there, use what you find to make flash cards of those formulas, study the formulas, and try using them on practice questions. If you are able to learn and apply just one or two more formulas that you didn't already have in your tool belt, or even just refresh yourself on those that you have forgotten, you could answer a few more questions correctly and increase your score!</p>
20-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change of Pace 	<p>At this range, you are answering just fewer than 40 of the 60 math questions correctly. Chances are the questions you are missing are the most difficult, or the last 20. If you usually take 1 minute per question because you know there are 60 questions and 60 minutes, try to speed up your time on the easier questions to leave yourself more time to figure out the harder ones. See if you can answer the first 20, which are meant to be the easiest questions, in 45 or 50 seconds to give yourself 10 or 15 seconds extra on the last 20. They are more difficult, so they should naturally take longer than the easier questions. Pace yourself to reflect this!</p>
24-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the Most Important Skills and Ignore the Rest 	<p>There are 24 skills tested on the Math ACT. Some are more heavily tested than others. The following subcategories are most important: rational numbers, algebra functions, algebra operations, integers, single variables, triangles, polygons, circles, lines, algebraic word problems, and trigonometry. They each represent 3-7 questions per test and 75% of the test in total. If you master these 11 skills that can be found in a practice book or online, you would be able to answer 45-46 out of the 60 questions correctly, taking your score up to a 28. Make meaningful use of your study time by focusing on the most important skills!</p>
28-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand All of Your Math Mistakes 	<p>You are at a score range in which you are probably answering the easy/medium questions (#1-40) correctly and with ease, but you are fighting for the last 20 questions. The key to raising your score to a 33 will be minimizing mistakes on the easier questions and getting a few more of the tougher questions correct. To do this, check your answers on the first 40 questions as you go by plugging in numbers. On the last 20 questions, if you are not sure how to approach a question within 30 seconds of encountering it, circle the question to let yourself know to come back to it or make a guess and move on to the next. To improve your chances of being comfortable with the last questions, take a practice test to identify skills you should practice. Make wise use of your study time by focusing on those skills!</p>
33-36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find Your Weaknesses and Drill Them 	<p>Your math score is almost perfect, so you need to isolate the last few concepts that you are struggling with and practice those questions to help you seal the deal on a perfect score! There are 24 subcategories tested on the Math ACT. It can be difficult to identify which of those categories you are missing, but taking a practice test online or ordering your answers from the June, December, or April National ACT should help you figure out what they are. Once you identify those subcategories, you can do meaningful practice on those types of questions since there is no need for you to waste time on the concepts you already have nailed down.</p>

☀ Reading

Score Range	Strategies	Explanations
ALL SCORES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do a quick skim of the item stems (questions) before you read the selection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowing ahead of time what you need to know regarding vocabulary, ideas, author's purpose, etc. can really help you focus your reading, so before you start to read the passage, take a look at all the questions or open-ended statements for that passage. What's important here is that you NOT read the answer choices, <u>just the questions</u>. At 8½ minutes per passage for reading and answering questions, do not waste time reading choices about information you don't even know, yet.
0-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with your strengths. As you read, identify the purpose the author had for writing a particular passage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every ACT Reading test has the same four types of passages, and they are always in this order: Prose fiction/literary narrative, Social science, Humanities, and Natural science. To get the most out of this test, start with the subject matter you prefer. If science is your favorite thing, you should skip to the last passage first. If you save it until last, you may have to rush through the one passage you could have scored quite well on. Almost all passages will have with them at least one question about what that particular author wanted to accomplish with that passage or a section of it.
13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skim the passages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick, efficient readers can get through this test with relative success; however, if you aren't much a reader, you've got to give yourself some help. The best strategy for most people is to skim the passages. To skim effectively, you should read the introduction and conclusion paragraphs and the first and last sentences of each body paragraph. This will give you a good overview of the main ideas and allow you to answer most main point questions about the passage. When you get to questions about details, you can read specific parts of the passage over again if necessary and time allows.
16-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn to eliminate 3 wrong answers. Don't focus on small details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One thing to remember is that even a single word can make an answer choice wrong. Every single word in each answer choice is put there by the ACT for a reason. If a single word in the answer choice isn't supported by the passage text, you need to eliminate it, even if the rest of the answer sounds good. This is an "open-book" test. Don't focus on small details that can just as easily be checked with a quick look back at the text of the passage.
20-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For vocabulary questions, always go back to the text. If time is your problem, skip one. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACT's number one focus with vocabulary is context. Before you automatically choose the answer because its 'definition' is one of the four choices, re-read how the word is used in the passage. Even though you may only know one definition for a word doesn't mean there aren't other uses. The passage will help you identify the right answer. If you always find yourself running out of time on the ACT Reading, consider this. Spend 10-11 minutes really focusing on 3 of the 4 passages, and then do a quick skim-and-guess for the 4th passage. The focus can get you much better scores on the three you complete, which will improve your over-all score.
24-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After reading the question, predict your own answer before looking at ACT's. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This strategy is exactly designed to counteract the trickiness of the answer choices. ACT intentionally makes two answers seem completely reasonable. By answering the question yourself, before you actually look at the answers, you are most likely to eliminate the 'close-to-the-right-answer' and help yourself choose the right answer. If you actually engage yourself in the reading, this trick can help you tremendously. Don't let yourself be biased by the ACT's answer choices, especially the incorrect ones.
28-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit time to taking timed practice tests. Don't fall into the classroom literature trap. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At this score range and beyond, timed practice tests with answer evaluations are going to improve your score the most. You can't expect to raise your score much past this level without committing to at least 3-5 hours of focused practice a week. In English classes, students are taught that if you can support your answer with examples from the text, then all interpretations of the literature are valid. Don't get trapped by words like <i>reasonably be inferred</i>, <i>best describes</i>, <i>for the most part</i>. There really is just one right answer for each question.
33-36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit time to taking timed practice tests. Isolate your biggest weakness and drill it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Again, this is a Top-10, Ivy League-level score, and you can't expect to raise your score to perfect or almost perfect without committing to at least 5-7 hours of focused practice a week. By taking repeated practice tests during the time mentioned above, find your weak areas and then practice and drill them until you don't get them wrong. If Vocabulary shows to be your weakness, practice ACT vocabulary questions until context clues become clear.

Score Range	Strategies	Explanations
ALL SCORES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Tips 	<p>General Advice: <u>Stay focused</u>, try your best on every question. Take 5-10 second breaks to stay awake. This is the easiest section to raise your overall score. <u>Don't panic</u> because of the big and confusing words, it isn't a vocabulary test. Underlining and circling will force you to read the passage over and over. <u>Make notes</u> to the side of the passage for important facts. Don't look for right answers. Eliminate the wrong answer.</p>
0-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't let test-fatigue take control • Read to locate information 	<p>This is your last test of the morning, and having to interpret 7 passages in 35 minutes can seem impossible after just finishing three other tests. With its overwhelming graphics and information that has little to do with what you actually cover in your science classes, this test can get the better of you before you even start. Don't be intimidated by it. In addition, make sure you read the 'passages' to locate information. You aren't being tested on your reading skills. Find the few relevant pieces of information and move on.</p>
13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on symbols and data representations 	<p>Preview the tables, diagrams and graphs and identify basic features. Look at the labels for the axis and legend in a graph or column header in a table. Use symbols to identify trends such as increasing (↑), decreasing (↓) or remaining steady (—). Eliminate the wrong answers rather than looking for the right answer. Don't put too much work into getting every question right for each passage. Focus on the first 3 questions right for each passage and guess if needed on the last 3. Why should you guess on the last few of each passage? If you get 2-3 questions right for each passage then you will have answered about 18 questions correctly. 18 correct answers would receive a scale score of 18 for the science section!!!!</p>
16-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predict and translate data. 	<p>Practice translating data into a table, graph or diagram, as well as interpolation and extrapolation of data. Be able to make predictions on a graph for data that falls both within and outside of the data set. Focus on the first 3-4 questions right for each passage and guess if needed on the last 1-3. If you answer 23-24 questions correctly then your score could increase to a 21 for the science section!!!!</p>
20-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify relationships between variables. 	<p>On average you're answering 24-28 out of 40 questions correctly. You will need to answer about 5 more to raise your score to the next level. Determine how the values of variables change as the value of another variable changes in a complex data presentation. Skills you need to practice are determining and/or using a simple (e.g., linear) mathematical relationship that exists between data. This may mean applying mathematical concepts to graphs in the passage. You will need to analyze presented information when given new, simple information such as predicting results of an additional trial.</p>
24-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate hypotheses identify methods for testing them 	<p>On average you are answering 29-32 out of 40 questions correctly. You will need to answer about 5 more to raise your score to the next level. Many of the same skills needed for earlier score ranges, such as mathematical relationships, interpolating and extrapolating, will be needed, but they will be used with more complexity. You will need to focus on identifying the validity of a hypothesis of an experiment as well as select an alternate method for testing the hypothesis. It would be most effective for you to practice science reasoning passages under a 5 minute time limit. Make doing one passage a day your goal. Determine if there is a pattern to your incorrect answers and work on any weaknesses.</p>
28-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to timed practice tests 	<p>Great job!!! You're answering 35-37 out of 40 questions correctly. Increasing to the next level will be a challenge. First, you will need to practice science reasoning passages with a 5 minute time limit. A good goal would be two passages a day. Analyze the results to determine if there is a pattern to incorrect answers. Second, practice an entire science reasoning section under the 35-minute time limit once a week and analyze the results.</p>
33-36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find Your Weaknesses and Drill Them 	<p>Amazing! You're answering almost every question correctly. Achieving a perfect 36 on the science reasoning test is possible with focus and practice. First, you will need to practice science reasoning passages with a 5-minute time limit. A good goal would be two passages a day. Analyze the results to determine if there is a pattern to incorrect answers. Second, practice an entire science reasoning section under the 35 minute time limit once a week and analyze the results. Certain reasoning skills will only develop with practice. If you want that perfect score then you will need to train! You will need to understand precision and accuracy issues, predict the effects of modifying the design or methods of an experiment as well as determine which additional trial or experiment could be performed to enhance or evaluate experimental results.</p>