

# EIGHT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE ACT TEST

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1. There are four sections on the ACT (English, math, reading, and science) and then a separate optional essay section. The “science” section is really just reading comprehension (no outside science knowledge is needed; all questions can be answered by understanding the given information.)
2. Answer **every question** on the ACT even if it just a guess; there is no penalty for wrong answers.
3. On the ACT, finishing all of the questions in time is difficult. The ACT rewards working quickly so students should push themselves to move quickly through each section. For example, if you are 90% sure about a question, answer it and move on rather than going back and double checking.
4. Again, you don't want your score to be lower due to the fact that you were not able to finish most questions in time. The best way to deal with this issue is to time yourself as you complete a few practice ACTs before the actual test. Get used to how much time a section lasts and how quickly you need to work to finish it.
5. The national average for the ACT is approximately 21. This is the approximate national average for the overall score and for each section.
6. Do not read the reading passages for too long. Only take between one and two minutes to read the long passages quickly. Just read enough to get a main understanding of the arguments or points the author is making. Once you get to the questions, you will be going back to the passages anyway to search for the right answer, so it doesn't make sense to read for too long.
7. Many students are curious as to how many questions they need to answer correctly on each section to earn a certain score. Here is one example: To earn an overall ACT score of 24, a student would need to get 55 out of 75 English questions correct, 37 out of 60 math questions correct, 26 out of 40 reading questions correct, and 29 out of 40 science questions correct.
8. Many students are curious about how the ACT and SAT compare to each other and here are some general thoughts. Most students find the ACT slightly easier and get a higher percentage of ACT questions correct. The downside is that the curve on the ACT is tougher so a student needs to get a higher percentage of ACT questions correct to earn a score that would be equal to the comparable SAT score. One of the reasons that students find the ACT slightly easier is that there are only 4 answer choices on every question of the ACT except for the math section where the questions have 5 answer choices. By contrast, every section of the SAT has 5 answer choices.