

## The ACT\*

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The ACT is a standardized achievement examination for college admissions in the United States produced by [ACT, Inc.](#) It was first administered in Fall 1959 as a competitor to the College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Test, now the SAT Reasoning Test. Some students who perform poorly on the SAT find that they perform better on the ACT and vice versa. In February 2005, an optional writing test was added.

All four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. accept the ACT, although it is more widely used in the Midwestern and Southern United States. The SAT has historically been more popular on the east and west coasts; although, the use of the ACT by these colleges has risen as a result of various criticisms of the effectiveness and fairness of the SAT.

The ACT assesment test costs \$30, or \$44.50 if you include the optional Writing test. It is offered four to six times a year, depending on the State, in September, October, December, February, April and June, and is always on a Saturday.

2008 Test Dates	Registration Deadlines	
	Regular	Late (a fee applies)
February 9, 2008**	January 4, 2008	January 5 - 18, 2008
April 12, 2008	March 7, 2008	March 8 - 21, 2008
June 14, 2008	May 9, 2008	May 10 - 23, 2008

\*\* Due to the special requirements of legislation in effect in New York, a February 2008 test is not scheduled in that state. This restriction may continue for the 2008 - 2009 testing year.

To register for the ACT, please visit [ACT, Inc.](#)

### Structure and Scoring

The ACT is divided into four multiple choice subject tests: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science and one optional Writing test. Subject test scores range from 1 to 36. The English, Mathematics, and Reading tests also have sub scores ranging from 1 to 18. (The subject score is not the sum of the sub scores.) The "composite score" is the average of all four tests rounded to the nearest whole number. In addition, students taking the Writing test receive a writing score ranging from 2 to 12, a "combined English/writing score" ranging from 1 to 36 (based on the writing score and English score), and one to four comments on the essay from the essay scorers. The writing score does not affect the composite score. Sometimes the test includes an experimental section that may be a short version of any of the four major sections. The experimental section is used to normalize questions for future administrations of the ACT and does not count toward the final score.

Unlike the [SAT](#), the ACT does not deduct points for incorrect answers. The ACT takes the raw score (number of correct answers) and converts them to a scale score. Scale scores have the same meaning for all the different versions of the ACT offered on different test dates. The scale scores are then sorted into National Ranks. The ranks show the percent of recent high school graduates who took the ACT and scored at or below each of the scale scores.

Section	Average Score	Time (Minutes)	Content
English	20.6	45	Usage / mechanics and rhetorical skills
Mathematics	20.8	60	Pre-algebra, elementary algebra, intermediate algebra; coordinate geometry, geometry, and elementary trigonometry
Reading	21.4	35	Reading comprehension
Science	20.9	35	Interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem-solving
Writing Test (Optional)	7.7	30	Writing skills

When you register for the ACT Reasoning Test, you can select up to four recipients (Colleges or Scholarship Programs) to receive a copy of your score report at no cost. Additional score reports can be ordered for a fee. Score recipients can be changed up until 12 noon Central Time on the Thursday immediately following the Saturday scheduled test date. If you take the ACT more than once, you can specify which test scores to send to additional recipients. Unlike the SAT, the ACT does not send scores from all tests taken.

Score reports are available online and a hard copy is usually mailed 3 to 7 weeks after the test date. If the Writing test is taken, the score report will be mailed only after the Writing scores have been added, normally within 5 to 7 weeks after the test date.

### Preparing

We recommend the following options for those looking to improve their scores on the ACT:

#### Number 2

Number2.com offers a **Free** online [ACT Companion](#) tutorial that provides personal tutoring, immediate feedback on incorrect answers, and adaptive training based on your skill level. Like their other test prep offerings, the price is free!

#### Act, Inc.

The maker of the ACT also offers test prep for the ACT. They offer a free "[Preparing for the ACT](#)" booklet as well as free practice test questions, along with paid options including [ACT Online Prep](#).

#### Kaplan

Kaplan also offers free ACT test prep items, such as the [Free ACT Quiz Bank](#), but they're really best known for their expensive, but good, online, classroom and private tutor based [ACT Programs](#).

*Please note: We are members of the affiliate programs for Kaplan. All links to their products include our affiliate id.*

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