

Open Path Tutoring

10 Strategies to Master the SAT & ACT

#10. Practice! No matter how you slice it, you cannot expect to increase your test score if you do not put in the work. Nearly all of the strategies here only become useful if you practice them prior to the official test.

#9. Feel the rhythm. One goal of test prep is to feel comfortable with the pacing of the test so that you're not preoccupied with time. It is better to get through 90% of the test feeling calm than 100% of the test feeling rushed.

#8. Math: Begin with the end in mind. The tests (especially the SAT) love to trick you by asking a question slightly different from what you expect. Note what the question is asking before starting each Math question.

#7. Reading: Outline main ideas of the passage. Think of the Reading section as an open book test. The key is knowing where to find the information you need. By noting main ideas, you can skim extra details and revisit a paragraph as needed.

#6. English: Listen for sentence structure. About 1 in 3 SAT Language questions and 1 in 4 ACT English questions are testing sentence structure. Listen for independent clauses, which contain a subject, verb, and completion of a thought.

#5. ACT Science: Skip to the questions. With the exception of the 1 passage that is all text and no data, you can skip the passage and use keywords in each question to pinpoint the necessary information from the tables, figures, and text.

#4. Answer questions in whatever order you wish. For Reading and ACT Science, save your hardest passage type for last so it doesn't take time away from other passages. Just be sure to bubble your scantron in the right place!

#3. Minimize time spent "stuck". Practice skipping questions quickly when you're not sure how to move forward. Sometimes when you come back to a question, you see it from another perspective that helps you realize what needs to be done.

#2. Anticipate the answer. Answer choices are designed to trick you, not help you! By predicting the answer before reading the options, you will be able to eliminate trap answers much more easily.

#1. Breathe. The SAT & ACT can be stressful, but you have the power to minimize that stress. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths before each section (and during it) to calm your nerves and refocus your attention. If stopping to breathe feels like a waste of time, then it's DEFINITELY worth doing!

