

Tips for the ACT Reading Test

Reading the questions first will allow you to focus on the _____ parts of the passage. You don't need to know every detail in each passage but rather the information that will help you _____. Keep in mind that the passage is at your level, and it will give you all the information that you need to know. Even if you just skim the passage, read the entire passage. The passage will always give you _____. That means that while Neil Armstrong's biography has little to do with the passage on space travel you may find a question that addresses that very thing. Learn to eliminate the wrong answers.

Keep in mind that the wrong answers on the ACT are 100% wrong. There are no answers that might be right on the ACT. The right answer will be 100% right, and it shouldn't leave you with _____.

Instead of trying to find which answers could be right, look for a reason for a question to be wrong. A _____ can make a question wrong.

There are a few classic wrong answer choices the ACT loves to use. Here's an example question.

Let's imagine you just read a passage talking about how

human evolution shaped the environment. It gives a few examples. First, it talks about how the transition from earlier species like Homo habilis to neanderthals led to more tool usage like fire, which caused wildfires and shaped the ecology. It then talks about Homo sapiens 40,000 years ago and their overhunting of species like woolly mammoths to extinction.

Question: "Which of the following best describes the main subject of the passage?"

- A: The transition between Homo habilis and neanderthals
- B: The study of evolution
- C: How the environment shaped human evolution
- D: The plausibility of evolution
- E: The influence of human development on ecology

What do you think is the correct answer? _____

Why are the other questions 100% wrong?

A-

B-

C-

D-

E-

___ Wrong Answer 1: Too Specific

This type of wrong answer focuses on a _____ in the passage. To help, you can ask yourself can this answer choice really describe the _____? Or does it work better as the title of the passage? You'll find that it's just way too specific to convey the point of the overall passage.

___ Wrong Answer 2: Too Broad

This type of wrong answer has the opposite problem – it's way too broad. Yes, theoretically the passage concerns the study of evolution, but only one aspect of it, and especially as it relates to the impact on the environment.

___ Wrong Answer 3: Reversed Relationship

This wrong answer choice can be tricky because it mentions all the right words. But of course the relationship between those words needs to be correct as well. Here, the relationship is flipped. Students who read too quickly make careless mistakes like these!

___ Wrong Answer 4: Unrelated Concept

Finally, this kind of wrong answer preys on the tendency of students to over think the question. This might be a trigger answer and, of course, this concept will appear nowhere in the passage, but some students just won't be able to resist.

On the surface, each of the answer choices sounds possibly correct.

But plausible isn't good enough. **The right answer needs to be 100%, totally right.** Wrong answers might be off by even one word - **you need to eliminate these.**

DON'T RELY ONLY ON YOUR _____!

If specific lines are referenced in the question, reread those lines. Don't trust your ability to remember every little detail.

STAY SPECIFIC!

Every right answer will have _____ in the passage. NEVER make an assumption based on context. Look for the evidence for each answer you think is right.

Don't leave any questions Unanswered. There is no penalty for a wrong answer, so make sure you answer every question.

Know the section structure

There are 4 different topics for your passages. They are always in the same order Prose Fiction, Social Studies, Humanities, and Natural Sciences. Each passage will have 10 questions about it. You can do the passages in any order, so start with your strongest passage type and work from there.

Find a strategy that works for you!

Here is the recommended ACT reading comprehension method:

1. Read the passage and write short notes next to each paragraph.
 - Focus on the topic and purpose of the passage
 - Keep track of different people and opinions
2. Read the question and identify helpful hints.
 - Line references and keywords can help you find the answer
3. **Predict an answer BEFORE you look at the answer choices.**

Some suggested strategies from high scoring ACT takers.

Passage Method 1: Skim the Passage, then Read the Questions

- Skim the passage on the first read through. Don't try to understand every single line, or write notes predicting what the questions will be. Just get a general understanding of the passage. You want to try to finish reading the passage in 3 minutes, if possible.
- Next, go to the questions. If the question refers to a line number, then go back to that line number and understand the text around it.
- **If you can't answer a question within 30 seconds, skip it.**

Pitfalls: You must be able to skim effectively. This means being able to quickly digest a text without having to slowly read every word. If you're not quite good at this yet, practice it on newspaper articles and your homework reading.

Passage Method 2: Read the Questions First and Mark the Passage

This is the second most common strategy and, if used well, as effective as the first method. But it has some pitfalls if you don't do it correctly.

Here's how it goes:

- Before you read the passage, go to the questions and read each one.
- If the question refers to a series of lines, mark those lines on the passage. Take a brief note about the gist of the question.

- Go back to the passage and skim it. When you reach one of your notes, slow down and take more notice of the question.
- Answer the questions.

Pitfalls: You need to have more experience with the ACT Reading section so that you can anticipate what the question is going to ask you for your notes to be helpful. If you're not sure of this, you can easily be led down the wrong track and focus on the wrong aspect of the passage.

Passage Method 3: Read the Passage In Detail, then Answer Questions

- Read the passage in detail, line by line.
- Take notes to yourself about the main point of each paragraph.
- Answer the questions.

Pitfalls:

- By reading the passage closely, you absorb a lot of details that aren't useful for answering questions.
- The notes you take aren't directed toward helping you answer the questions.
- By interpreting the passage ahead of time, you risk being led astray.

Know the ACT reading comprehension trap answers

1. _____ – twists details from the passage so they are no longer correct
2. _____ – a true statement from the passage, but one that doesn't answer the question
3. _____ – includes information not included in the passage
4. _____ – too extreme to reflect the author's purpose (often includes words like always, never, best, worst, etc.)
5. _____ – contradicts the information in the passage

Know the ACT reading comprehension question types

Main Idea questions – Ask about the _____

Inference & Writer's View questions – Ask you to understand something that _____ in the passage

Detail questions – Ask about _____ of the passage

Vocab-in-Context questions – Ask about a _____ in the passage

Function questions – Ask about the _____ of a specific part of the passage

Understand Your High Level Weakness: Time Management, Passage Strategy, or Vocabulary. PRACTICE YOUR WEAKNESS!

Force yourself to be fascinated by the subject matter.

Find ways to save time! Solve all your questions first in the book, then bubble all of them in at once.