

# The National College Planning Summit

## Everything You Need To Know About the ACT

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[www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)

[www.act.org/profile/](http://www.act.org/profile/)

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### 1. Can you give us the history of the ACT?

- a. The ACT was started in 1959 with a mission to help people achieve two things: Education Success and Workplace Success.
- b. 1.925 million students took the ACT in 2015.
- c. More students have taken the ACT over the SAT for the past 4 years.

### 2. What is the ACT Test?

- a. It is a curriculum and standards based educational planning tool that assesses a student's academic readiness for college.
- b. It focuses on English, Math, Reading, Science, Writing (optional)
- c. Additionally, it is a Career Interest Inventory which gives the student all the planning information they need to tie their academics together with career planning & college planning.
- d. How long is the test?
  - i. English – 45 min
  - ii. Math – 60min
  - iii. Reading – 35 min
  - iv. Science – 35 min
  - v. Writing (optional) – 40 min

**Prior to test day, the student will complete the registration info and also the career interest inventory questions. This takes about another 30-40 minutes.**

### 3. At what grade level do students take the ACT?

- a. The majority of students take it in the Spring of their Junior year or early Fall of Senior year.
- b. Because it is a curriculum based achievement test, it is measuring what students have learned in school from day one through Junior year.

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### 4. Where do they take it?

- a. The test has national test dates which are on a Saturday and students go to various testing sites.
- b. Some students take the test through State and District testing.
  - i. The District can administer the ACT during the school day on their campus as part of an agreement with ACT just for the students on that campus.

### 5. How do students register?

- a. Online at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)
- b. Only 3-5% register by paper & mail. Generally because they don't have a credit card or are under age 13.

### 6. How is the ACT scored?

- a. 1-36 scale score for each test. The composite score is the average of the 4 test scores.
- b. Each academic battery has sub scores 1-18.
  - i. Student can go online to get information on scoring.
  - ii. Students get composite score and sub scores in each area.
- c. In 2015 they added additional scores and readiness indicators – these are helpful for the student:
  - i. ELA - English Language Arts Score
  - ii. STEM - Math and Science Achievement Levels
  - iii. Understanding Complex Text Indicator – This tells the student if they are proficient in reading and understanding complex texts that they will find either in college or in the workplace.
  - iv. Progress Toward Career Readiness Indicator – This is based on how the student performed on the ACT and shows how they are likely to perform “ACT work keys.” These are workplace skills assessments which result in the National Career Readiness Certificate. This is a transferable certificate issued by the ACT which certifies the student at a certain level for workplace skills.

### 7. Not only is the ACT test used for college admissions, but it is also a Life and Work Assessment.

- a. The ACT is the #1 college assessment test in the country.
- b. It is a curriculum and career planning tool - not just an assessment.
- c. It helps students align their interests and academics with career and major interests.

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### 8. How do colleges use ACT score reports?

- a. They use the score reports in a number of ways:
  - i. College Admissions
  - ii. Recruiting
  - iii. Advising the student
  - iv. Scholarships
  - v. CareerPlanning

### 9. How is the ACT different than SAT?

- a. The ACT has always been about access for all students and it is curriculum based.
- b. What makes it powerful is that the ACT ties the academics to the career interest of the student and career planning.
- c. The ACT really becomes a planning tool not just a test.
- d. The Writing section is optional. Students can choose if they want or need to take it. (check with the colleges you are applying to)

### 10. What are the changes coming to the ACT?

- a. ACT is a researched based organization and we want to make sure our solutions at ACT are relevant to today's student.
- b. Beginning in fall 2015, the writing test will emphasize the student's ability to evaluate multiple perspectives on a complex issue and generate an analysis based on reasoning, knowledge and experience.
- c. It will be a Single Prompt but instead of a holistic single score, it will have analytic reporting of 4 domain scores – which are:
  - i. Ideas & Analysis
  - ii. Development & Support
  - iii. Organization
  - iv. Language Use
- d. This will provide better information about college and career readiness for the student and school.

### 11. What can you tell us about Test Optional Colleges?

- a. Test Optional means that students do not have to report standardized test scores. However, many schools that are "test optional" are doing it for only selective programs within that institution, not for general acceptance of the freshman class.

### 12. How should students prepare for the ACT?

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- a. A great place to start is [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)—and see the question of the day.
- b. It is really important for students to understand the format of the test. For example, knowing that there are 60 questions in 60 minutes for the Math Test makes students more comfortable on test day.
- c. Review the sample questions on the website.

### 13. How do students submit scores to colleges?

- a. 4 scores are included in the price of the test when they register for the ACT.
- b. Call 800-553-6244 ext 1313 if you need to send scores to additional colleges.

### 14. Can students get a copy of the test they've taken?

- a. For selected test dates you can get a summarization of their performance on the ACT.

### 15. Do students ever re-take the ACT?

- a. Yes—two or sometimes even threetimes.
- b. Statistics have shown that when students take the ACT a second or third time:
  - i. 57 % of students increase their composite score.
  - ii. 21% have no change.
  - iii. 20-22% composite score has decreased.

### 16. Do you have any test taking advice for students?

- a. Students have been preparing for the ACT since they enrolled in school because it is a curriculum based achievement test. As long as students are in a rigorous core curriculum in High School, they are learning what they need to know on the ACT.
- b. The only other thing they need to do is really understand the format of the test.
  - i. How many questions are in each section?
  - ii. How many minutes do they have to complete each test section?
  - iii. What to expect on test day?
  - iv. There is no penalty for guessing – so don't leave any questions unanswered.

### 17. Go to [www.actstudent.org/testprep/](http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/) for additional information about “Test Tips”

- a. General Test Taking Tips
- b. TestDay Tips
- c. Test Day Check List

### 18. What other resources are on the website?

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- a. There is a CollegePlanning Tab which has information about:
  - i. Academic preparation
  - ii. How to choose a college
  - iii. How to apply to colleges
  - iv. College planning checklist
- b. There is also the ACT Educational Opportunities Service.
  - i. This allows colleges to recruit the student.
- c. There is a FinancialAid Tab.
  - i. Learn the lingo and basics about Financial Aid.

### 19. What are some of the Career Planning Resources on the website?

- a. World of Work Map -This highlights the student's areas of interest based on how they answer the questions when they register for the test.
- b. There is Apprenticeshipinformation.
- c. Information on how to choose a major.

### 20. What is [www.act.org/profile/](http://www.act.org/profile/)and [www.actprofile.org/](http://www.actprofile.org/)?

- a. ACT Profile is a free resource where students can createan account.(It is different than[www.actstudent.org/](http://www.actstudent.org/))
  - i. It specifically focuses on career interest inventories and matching careers and majors of the student.
  - ii. ACTProfile students will use this after they take the test -the website is constantly changing and being updated.

### 21. How long until you get the scores?

- a. Students can access their scores through their student account in 2-4 weeks.
- b. Withoptional writing it will take 6-8 weeks.
- c. So, plan on 6-8 weeks.

### 22. CanI cancel reporting to colleges after I see my score?

- a. No, butthis isn't always a negative. If students retake the ACT and send the new scores, the university knows that the student is very interested in attending that school.

### 23. Do you recommend students take a review class, or purchase ACT review books,etc, to prepare for the ACT?

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- a. There is not a need for a lot of additional test preparation because the ACT is a curriculum based achievement test - as long as students are in a rigorous core curriculum in High School, then they are learning what they need to know for the ACT. At [www.actstudent.org/testprep/](http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/) we have the following resources:
  - i. ACT Online Prep – Student log in and have a variety of tools available to them.
  - ii. Official ACT Prep Book – you can purchase from the ACT website. This is the only prep book that ACT releases.
  - iii. The most important way to prepare for the ACT is to make sure that students are in a rigorous core curriculum to succeed.

### 24. Do you have any final thoughts?

- a. Students, make sure you really understand the format of the test. This will help you perform better on Test Day.
- b. ACT is here to help students not only with college admissions but also with career planning.
- c. ACT has always been a leader in college and career readiness and has always been about helping people achieve education and workplace success.
- d. Don't be scared of the ACT Composite Score – students should be excited about all the information they get back from the ACT that can help them with planning career goals and majors.
- e. **Contact ACT with any questions 1-800-553-6244.**