

ACT “Tips”

For this week’s ACT tip, we will review strategies to approach the science portion of the test.

The science test is 40 Questions in 35 minutes. For in-home practice, count how many questions are in a passage, and give yourself one minute less. For example: Do a 7 question passage in 6 minutes.

Step 1. Take a very quick look at the passage to determine if it is data presentation (no subheads); research analysis (subheads say experiment 1, 2,3 or study 1, 2,3); or conflicting viewpoints (mostly text and subheads say student 1, 2, 3 or scientist 1, 2, 3). Data presentation passages are easiest; research is next, conflicting viewpoints is hardest and takes the longest for most people.

Step 2. Go directly to the questions. Do not read the passage. Use the questions as signposts to direct you to the part of the passage that contains the answer.

Step 3. Use your finger, and actually point to each “label” in a question. For example, “In figure 2”- stop reading the question and point to figure two; “as wing area” stop reading the question and find the label on a graph for wing area; “increases” stop reading the question and locate the way the graph presents the wing area increasing; “the hydrogen isotope:” Go find the label for the hydrogen isotope. If you cannot find the label on a figure, look at the text and skim for the label. It might even be in a footnote.

Step 4. Now read the answer options and go through them, looking back at Figure 2, and check each option for whether it is true or false.

Step 5. Find the questions that ask you to think logically about larger concepts. They are usually at the end of the passage. Remember to use prior knowledge and your own logical thinking to check your answer.

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The ACT Test and TOPS

Students in Louisiana who are full-time residents and citizens are fortunate to have TOPS to help pay for college if they keep their grades up and earn a minimum score on the ACT.

The ACT is composed of four individual tests taken over 2.5 hours: English, Math, Reading and Science. Students can study and prepare for this exam. For English, review grammar rules-- punctuation, sentence structure and subject verb agreement among others.

For Math, review elementary algebra introduced in 7th grade as well as exponent rules, matrices, functions, basic number facts and geometry rules.

For Reading, practice finding textual evidence for answers. Always ask yourself: where in the text can I find the answer? What does this sentence mean? What is the context? The skill that makes more difference in raising ACT reading scores than anything else is the ability to read complex text and make meaning even from passages above one's reading level.

For Science, students must think like a scientist, but they do not have to know every single science fact they've learned in school. Practice reading charts and graphs, identifying axis labels and trends. Some science to review: genetics, cells, atomic structure basics (for example, know that an electron has a negative charge), balanced equations, PH.

Find real ACT practice tests by searching online for “Preparing for the ACT.”

According to Louisiana Next, 2018-2019 issue, for TOPS Tech students, the Opportunity Award kicks in at a 17 ACT Composite. For degree-seeking students, there are three TOPS levels, and the minimum GPA is changing. When matched with a 2.5 or higher GPA, an ACT composite of 20 brings in the most TOPS money (TOPS Opportunity), a 23 plus a 3.0 earns just \$400 more per year (TOPS Performance), and a 27 plus a 3.0 earns \$800 more than a 20 (TOPS Honors). However, parents of Freshmen, Sophomores and Juniors, beginning with the Class of 2021, the core GPA required to earn the TOPS Performance will be 3.25 and Honors will be 3.5. For specific information about how much TOPS your student may qualify for, visit:

https://www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/TOPS_Payment_Amounts.pdf
