

Preparing for the ACT

**basic information
and testing strategies**

The ACT is predictable!

- It tests the same information in the same way each year.
- It is an achievement test, which assesses your knowledge in English, math, reading, and science reasoning.

Section 1: English

- **45 minutes, 75 questions**
- tests your skills in *grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and rhetorical strategies*
- requires you to analyze 5 essays for revision, organization, and writing style
- primarily an editing test

Section 2: math

- **60 minutes, 60 questions**
- 1/3 questions about *pre-algebra* and *elementary algebra*
- 1/3 of the questions about *intermediate algebra* and *coordinate geometry*
- 1/4 of the questions about *regular geometry*
- 4 questions about *trigonometry*

Section 3: reading

- **35 minutes, 40 questions**
- 4 passages of approximately 750 words each in this order: (1) *prose fiction*, (2) *social science*, (3) *humanities*, (4) *natural science*
- 10 questions per passage requiring you to comprehend, infer, recognize details, understand purpose

Section 4: science reasoning

- **35 minutes, 40 questions**
- no specific science knowledge necessary
- questions require you to make judgments about 6 sets of science information (*graphs, charts, tables, research summaries*) as well as to analyze a disagreement between 2 or more scientists

Section 5: writing (optional)

- **30 minutes, 1 essay**
- requires you to take a position on a persuasive topic, provide supporting evidence, organize your ideas clearly, and use language effectively

test-taking strategies

- For each question, decide whether it is a NOW, LATER, or NEVER question. Circle the LATERs so that you can go back to them. Cross through the NEVERs.
- Approach each section in two passes:
 - (1) Answer all the NOWs.
 - (2) Go back to the LATERs. Guess on all the NEVERs (*same letter for all your guesses*) because there's no penalty.

test-taking strategies (continued)

- Use **POE** (*process of elimination*) by focusing on identifying what is incorrect in order to arrive at the correct answer.
- Don't make bubbling mistakes. Circle your answers in the test booklet, and then transfer to your bubble sheet at the end of each page.

test-day strategies

- Night before test: (1) Get out pencils, calculator, watch, admission ticket, and ID.
(2) Go to bed at a normal hour.
- Morning of test: (1) Eat a healthful breakfast—not sugars and fats.
(2) Warm up by practicing ACT questions.
- During test: (1) Tune out any distractions.
(2) Eat a snack and drink water at break.

testing suggestions

- Take ACT at end of junior year (and then again during fall of senior year if necessary).
- Spend time during summer before senior year studying and reviewing.
- Take the ACT on a TIR (*Test Information Release*) date: 10 Dec. 2011, 14 Apr. 2012, and 9 June 2012. For a fee of \$18, you receive a copy of the actual test and your answer sheet. A great individualized study aid!