

Frequently Asked Questions About the ACT®

Q. What is the ACT?

A. The ACT is a college admission examination that consists of tests in English, mathematics, reading, and science—and an optional Writing Test.

The ACT includes 215 multiple-choice questions. The ACT is prepared according to the:

- *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education. (1999).
- *Code of Professional Responsibilities in Educational Measurement*, National Council on Measurement in Education. (1995).
- *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education*, Joint Committee on Testing Practices. (2004).

Q. How long does the test take?

A. The ACT without the Writing Test takes 3½ hours, including administration instructions and breaks. Actual testing time is 2 hours and 55 minutes, broken down as follows:

- English: 45 minutes; Math: 60 minutes;
- Reading: 35 minutes; Science: 35 minutes

The ACT Writing Test adds 30 minutes to the testing time.

Q. Why should students take the ACT?

A. There are at least four good reasons to take the ACT:

1. **The ACT tests are universally accepted for college admission.** All four-year colleges and universities in the United States, including all of the Ivy League schools, accept the ACT.
2. **The ACT tests are curriculum based.** The ACT is not an aptitude or an IQ test. Instead, the questions on the ACT are directly related to what is taught in high school courses in English, mathematics, and science. Because the ACT tests are based on what is taught in the high school curriculum, students are generally more comfortable with the ACT than they are with aptitude tests or tests with narrower content.

3. **The ACT is more than a test.** In addition to the academic tests, the ACT also provides a unique interest inventory that provides valuable information for career and educational planning and a student profile section that provides a comprehensive profile of high school work and future plans.

4. **The ACT is a good value.** As a not-for-profit organization governed by educators, ACT is committed to providing services at the lowest possible cost. Accordingly, the ACT provides a comprehensive package of educational assessment and career planning services at a modest fee.

Q. When are the test dates?

A. In the United States, the ACT is administered on six national test dates: in September, October, December, February, April, and June.

Q. What is an ACT student Web account and why does a student need one?

A. ACT encourages all students to establish a free Web account. The student will be required to provide identifying information in order to set up an account. Once they do, they will be able to do all of the following 24/7, anywhere they have Internet access:

- Register online to take the ACT
- Print their admission ticket
- Make changes to their registration
- Update their student profile and view their account history
- View their scores
- Request additional score reports, if needed
- Order test preparation materials

Q. How often can a student take the ACT?

A. There are some restrictions on retesting. These restrictions apply to all administrations, even if the student did not receive scores (for example, the student did not want the answer document scored or the student's scores were cancelled by ACT).

- **A student may take the ACT no more than 12 times total.**

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- After the student has tested 12 times, he or she will not be able to register or test. If the student is inadvertently allowed to test, he or she will not receive scores, or the scores will be cancelled.
- Students can test only once per national, international, or state ACT test date.
- If students test through another program, such as Special Testing, they must wait a minimum of 60 days between retests.

Q. When should a student consider retaking the ACT?

- A.** Many students take the test more than once. Students should consider retesting if they:
- encountered any problems during the tests such as misunderstanding the directions or not feeling physically well.
 - are not satisfied their scores accurately represent their abilities in the areas tested.
 - think there is a discrepancy between their ACT scores and their high school grades.
 - have subsequently completed coursework in the areas covered by the ACT.
 - want to apply to a college that requires or recommends the Writing Test and have not taken it.

Students who decide to retake the Writing Test must **first** retake the multiple-choice tests in the same test session. The Writing Test cannot be taken by itself.

Q. How will students do on a retest?

- A.** ACT research shows that of the students who took the ACT more than once:
- 57 percent increased their composite score on the retest
 - 21 percent had no change in their composite score on the retest
 - 22 percent decreased their composite score on the retest

If a student takes the test more than once, he or she determines what set of scores are sent to colleges or scholarship programs.

Q. When is the ACT Writing Test offered?

- A.** The ACT Writing Test is offered on all national test dates and four test dates internationally.

Q. What does the test cost?

- A.** The basic fee for the ACT in 2011–2012, which includes reports for the student, high school (if the student authorized reporting), and up to four valid college codes listed at the time of registration, is \$34.00 in the United States. There are additional fees for the optional Writing Test (\$15.50), late registration, standby testing, changing test centers or test dates, international testing, and for additional services and products.

Q. What should students take to the test center?

- A.** Students should be sure to take these items to the test center:
- Your admission ticket. **Your scores will be delayed, possibly up to eight weeks, if you do not enter the matching information exactly as it appears on your admission ticket onto your answer document.**
 - **Acceptable identification.** Your admission ticket is not identification. You will not be admitted to test without acceptable identification as listed at www.actstudent.org.
 - Sharpened soft lead No. 2 pencils with good erasers (no mechanical pencils or ink pens).
 - A watch to pace yourself. The supervisor in standard time rooms will announce when five minutes remain on each test.
 - A permitted calculator, if you wish to use one on the Mathematics Test. Not all calculators are permitted. For a complete description of prohibited calculators, visit www.actstudent.org or call 800/498-6481 for a recorded message.

You may NOT take any of the following items into the test room:

- Books, dictionaries, notes, scratch paper, or other aids
- Highlighters, colored pens or pencils, or correction fluid
- **Any** electronic device other than a permitted calculator (examples include timer, cell phone, media player, iPad, headphones, camera)
- Reading material
- Tobacco in any form

Q. How do students get their admission ticket?

- A.** Students registering on the Web must print their admission tickets. Only students registering by mail receive their admission tickets in the mail—about 2 weeks after they mail their registration folders. All students with an ACT Web account can print their admission tickets, even if they registered by mail. **Students must bring their admission tickets to the test center on test day.**

Q. When and how are scores reported?

- A.** ACT score reports are produced for students and the high schools, colleges, and scholarship agencies indicated by the student at the time of registration. Most multiple-choice scores are available for viewing on the Web beginning about 3 weeks after each test date. Writing scores are usually added two weeks after the multiple-choice scores are available. Reports are normally sent 3–8 weeks after the test date (5–8 for ACT Plus Writing), unless there is an unpaid registration fee. Student Reports are mailed directly to the student's home mailing address. High School Reports are sent directly to the student's high school if the student authorized reporting. (If a student does not provide a valid high school code, no High School Report is created; only the Student Report is mailed. Any later request for a High School Report requires an Additional Score Report fee.)

■ **Additional Score Reports**

Students may also request Additional Score Reports **after** they test to any recipient.

Q. What scores are reported if a student tests more than once?

- A.** If a student has taken the ACT more than once, we maintain a separate record for each test date. If requested to send a report to a college, we will release only the record from the test date indicated. This protects students and ensures that they direct the reporting of their scores.

A student may ask ACT to report more than one test date record to an institution. However, he or she may not select test scores from different test dates to construct a new record; a student must designate an entire test date record as it stands. ACT does not create new records by averaging scores from different test dates. If a student wishes to report Writing results, the entire record for that test date must be reported.

Q. What if you have reason to suspect a test has been compromised or students had an unfair advantage?

- A.** If you suspect any unethical actions—such as someone having access to the tests in advance, sending another person to test in his or her place, or copying someone else's answers—please report your concerns by calling 1-877-777-7296 (U.S. and Canada only) or providing information online at act.alertline.com. You can report your concerns anonymously.

Q. How were the specifications for the Writing Test determined?

- A.** We followed the same curriculum-based process used for the current four-test battery. This process began with the ACT National Curriculum Survey® involving both high school English teachers and college faculty who teach entry-level composition courses. The information we obtained through the survey was considered by a national panel of educators who helped us design the exact test specifications. Using this process enabled us to develop a Writing Test that measures writing proficiencies that are taught in high school and are important for readiness to succeed in entry-level college composition courses.

Q. How does the ACT Writing Test correspond to state learning standards?

A. Since the ACT is a curriculum-based achievement test, there is a high degree of overlap between the ACT Writing Test and state standards. We have compared the specifications for the new Writing Test to the state standards in over thirty states. The ACT Writing Test measures the essential writing skills that have been identified by postsecondary English/writing instructors for college success, and appear in most, if not all, state standards.

Q. How much does the Writing Test cost?

A. The fee for the Writing Test is an additional \$15.50. This has been a significant factor in our decision to offer the Writing Test as an option. Not all students have to pay the increased fee when the colleges they are considering do not require or use it. The ACT registration fee for 2011–2012 is \$34.00.

Q. Does ACT provide fee waivers?

A. The ACT Fee Waiver Program is designed to assist students in the U.S., U.S. territories, and Puerto Rico for whom payment of the basic registration fee could be a barrier to college entrance. Fee waiver information and request forms are sent each summer to high schools in the U.S., U.S. territories, and Puerto Rico that have submitted fee waiver requests in the past year, to active Upward Bound projects, and to selected assistance organizations. Students cannot request waivers from ACT—they must work through the high school or assistance organization.

A limited number of fee waivers are authorized each testing year. Once funds have been exhausted, requests for waivers are denied. Schools are therefore encouraged to seek alternate funding sources within the community.

Eligible students may use a maximum of **two** ACT fee waivers **total**. Students must meet **all three** of the following requirements:

1. Be currently enrolled in high school in the **11th or 12th grade**.
2. Be a U.S. Citizen or testing in the U.S., U.S. territories, or Puerto Rico.

3. Meet one or more of the indicators of **economic need** listed on the Fee Waiver Eligibility Requirements flier.

The waiver is used once the student registers, even if the student does not test on the requested test date.

Fee waivers cover **only** the basic registration fee for either the ACT (No Writing) or ACT Plus Writing. Fee waivers may **not** be used to pay for late registration fee, test date or test center changes, standby fee, 5th or 6th college codes, any other services or products, or Residual Testing.

Eligible students may register by mail or on the Web, following the instructions on the printed waiver, which has a serial number in the top right corner. The fee waiver forms are updated and distributed annually, and remain valid through August 31 each year.

Q. What advice should we give students about deciding whether to take the Writing Test?

A. Students should decide whether to take the ACT Writing Test based on the admission policies of the postsecondary institutions in which they are interested and on the advice of their high schools. We routinely list and update information on the ACT website about individual college policies—whether they require, recommend, or do not need results from the ACT Writing Test. Students should consult this list before registering.

Q. Where can I get more information on the ACT Writing Test?

A. We encourage you to go to **www.act.org/aap/writing** for more information on the ACT Writing Test, including:

- Sample essays
- Writing Test scores and comments
- *The Educator's Guide to the ACT Writing Test*
- A searchable list of colleges that have provided ACT with information on their policies