**6 Strategies to Get the Most Out Of ACT Practice Tests**

When you set aside four hours for an ACT practice test, it's important to try to get the most out of your time and energy. Using our six critical tips below as you take your ACT tests can help you prepare more effectively for test day.

**#1: Print Out the Test and Work Through It on Paper**

You're going to take the actual ACT on paper (as opposed to a computer), so**it's best to emulate this format by taking each practice test on paper, too.** Do your scratch work directly in your "test book" (in other words, not on separate pieces of scratch paper—remember, you won't get any extra paper on test day, though [you *are* allowed to take notes directly on your test!](https://blog.prepscholar.com/act-test-booklet)).

If you're taking the Writing (essay) section, **be sure to use the lined essay paper (included in each PDF above) to write out your essay by hand.**

**#2: Keep Strict Timing on Every Section**

Many students struggle with time pressure on the ACT. Going over a section's time limit by just two minutes can make a noticeable difference in your score since you're essentially giving yourself the chance to answer two or three more questions.

**This is why it's so important to adhere to the official time limits.** Not only will this help you get used to the test structure, but it'll also let you learn how to identify your weaknesses.

Here are the official time limits on the ACT as well as approximately how long you should aim to spend per question on each section:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **ACT Section** | **Time per Section** | **Time per Question** |
| English | 45 minutes | 36 seconds |
| Math | 60 minutes | 60 seconds |
| Reading | 35 minutes | 52 seconds |
| Science | 35 minutes | 52 seconds |
| Writing (Optional) | 40 minutes | 40 minutes |

Last but not least, the ACT [isn't without breaks](https://blog.prepscholar.com/how-long-is-the-act), so **make sure to rest during your test,** **too!**

**#3: Take the Test in One Sitting, If Possible**

The ACT is a marathon: it [lasts about four hours](https://blog.prepscholar.com/how-long-is-the-act), and you have to take it on a Saturday morning. Thousands of students have told me how difficult it is to stay focused during the whole exam and how easy it is to make careless mistakes at the end of the test.

Just like training for a marathon, **you need to ensure you've got enough endurance to be able to succeed on the ACT.** And the best way to do this is to take a practice test in one sitting—just as you will on test day.

If there's no possible way for you to take an ACT test in one sitting (for example, maybe you're an athlete and have practice every day that completely wears you out), **it's OK to split up the test over multiple days—just as long as you're obeying each section's time limit exactly.**

In the end, it's better to do some practice than none at all!

 

**#4: Review Your Answers and Mistakes**

The main point of taking ACT practice tests isn't just getting to do a lot of questions—it's being able to [**learn from your mistakes**](https://blog.prepscholar.com/the-best-way-to-review-your-mistakes-for-the-sat-act)**.**

For every test you take, **review all of your mistakes as well as every question you got right.** If you don't know why you missed a question, don't gloss over it! Doing this means you won't learn from your mistakes and will keep making them over and over again, thereby lowering your score.

Ultimately, learn to prize study **quality over quantity.** It's better to take three ACT practice tests with detailed review instead of six practice tests with no review.

**#5: Take At Least 4 Practice Tests Before Test Day**

Based on my experience with thousands of students, I've found that **taking four practice tests makes you extremely comfortable with the ACT in all respects:** timing, endurance, and even stress.

While you can definitely take more than four tests if you want, you'll need to balance this practice with some focused prep on your weaknesses so that you can make faster progress.

**#6: No Score Improvement? Supplement Your Practice Tests**

Some students are great at using practice tests to study by themselves—they'll see a mistake they made, instantly realize why they made it, and then avoid making it in the future.

That said, **most students need additional help with pinpointing their weaknesses and getting down key test-taking skills and strategies.**Some of the best options for prep help include hiring a tutor, buying a [comprehensive ACT prep book](https://blog.prepscholar.com/the-10-best-act-books-recommended-for-act-prep), and taking [an online ACT prep course](https://www.prepscholar.com/act/s/).

[Our dedicated guide](https://www.prepscholar.com/sat/l/compare_methods_prep) can help you figure out which ACT prep method works best for you.