**General Test-Taking Strategies**

Preparing for the test:

1. Exercise your mind.
2. Take care of your body.
3. Develop strategies

**Mental Preparation – Exercise your Mind**

Get organized.

Learn as much as you can about the ACT.

* [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)
* Talk to students who have taken the test and ask for their impressions.
* Familiarize yourself with the content and format of each individual test. Note which skill is measured on each test.

If you encounter an area you feel you lack knowledge in, get the help you need to refresh yourself on the information.

Because the ACT measures knowledge acquired over a period of time, it is unlikely that a “cram” course covering the material that is unfamiliar to you will help you improve your scores.

Plan study time. Take this seriously and realize that studying for the ACT will actually take up a small part of your life – if you are going to do it right!!

Develop a positive mental attitude. Be confident that you can do your best. Practice positive thinking.

**Physical Preparation – Take Care of your Body**

Exercise. Your mind will function better if your body is healthy.

Diet is important.

On test day, eat the healthiest breakfast you are accustomed to. If you are a light eater, eat a light healthy breakfast. If you are used to a substantial breakfast, eat that, just make sure it’s healthy.

A sugary breakfast will probably work against you. The initial surge of energy will feel good, but you will come down from that sugar high about halfway through the morning.

You can have a snack during the break. Pack one in a backpack and take it out in the hall during the break. (You will have a 10-minute break at the end of the second test).

DO NOT “take something” to give you more energy! The effect on your body of taking drugs not prescribed for you by a medical doctor is negative. Period!

Get plenty of rest the night before. It is just one night out of your life. Stay home and relax. Watch a movie. You cannot expect to do well on this test if you stay out late at night with friends. Go to bed when you typically do. You know how many hours of sleep you need to feel rested.

**Develop Strategies – Tricks of the Trade**

Learn to pace yourself. Be familiar with how many questions there are in each test and how long you have for each test.

**Subtests and Times**

**English 75 questions 45 minutes**

**Math 60 questions 60 minutes**

**\*\*One ten minute break\*\***

**Reading 40 questions 35 minutes**

**Science 40 questions 35 minutes**

**215 questions Just under 3 hours**

**If you are completing the Writing Exam, there is a break then a 30 minute essay test.**

**TAKE A WATCH.** Lay it on your desk and watch the time for each test. Keep in the back of your mind how you are doing with time vs. number of questions left.

Be in control of how long the test is taking. It will not help you to push so fast you feel out of control – this leads to mistakes. And, if you think about it, answering 60 questions so quickly that through carelessness you miss 20 questions…..doesn’t give you a better score than answering 50 more slowly and only missing 10.

**USE ALL THE TIME GIVEN.** If you finish the Math test before the 60 minutes are up, go back and check your answers. This could help you to get a few more questions right, while staring out the window or taking a nap gets you nothing.

Know the directions and understand the answer document. The directions for each test are ALWAYS the same. It will save you time if you are so familiar with the directions you only need to glance at them when you open your test booklet.

Be aware of differences in directions. The ACT English, Reading, and Science tests ask for the BEST answer, while the Math test ask for the CORRECT answer.