

CLIFFS

ACT

PREPARATION GUIDE

AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING

By Jerry Bobrow, Ph.D.
William A. Covino, Ph.D.
David A. Kay, M.S.
Stephen Fisher, M.A.
Harold Nathan, Ph.D.

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PREFACE

YOUR ACT BATTERY, STUDENT PROFILE, AND INTEREST INVENTORY ARE IMPORTANT TO YOUR FUTURE! They can help you (1) assess your interests and skills, (2) plan your career, and (3) get a scholarship. Because of this, your study time must be used most effectively. You need the most comprehensive test preparation guide that you can realistically complete in a reasonable time. It must be short, direct, precise, easy-to-use, and thorough, giving you all the assistance you need to do your best on the ACT Battery.

In keeping with the fine tradition of Cliffs Notes, this guide was developed by leading experts in the field of test preparation as part of a series to specifically meet these standards. The testing strategies, techniques, and materials have been researched, tested, and evaluated, and are presently used at test preparation programs at many leading colleges and universities. This guide emphasizes the BOBROW TEST PREPARATION SERVICES approach, which focuses on the six major areas:

1. Ability Tested
2. Basic Skills Necessary
3. Understanding Directions
4. Analysis of Directions
5. Suggested Approaches with Samples
6. Practice-Review-Analyze-Practice

These major areas include valuable terminology, formulas, tables, and charts to assist you in the specific areas. Two complete simulation ACT Batteries are also included with answers and *in-depth* explanations.

This guide was written to give you the edge in doing your best by maximizing your effort in a reasonable amount of time. It is meant to augment, not substitute for, formal or informal learning throughout junior high and high school. If you follow the Study Guide Checklist in this book and study regularly, you will get the best test preparation possible.

STUDY GUIDE CHECKLIST

- ___ 1. Read the ACT Information Bulletin.
- ___ 2. Become familiar with the Test Format, page 3.
- ___ 3. Familiarize yourself with the answers to Questions Commonly Asked about the ACT, page 5.
- ___ 4. Learn the techniques of Two Successful Overall Approaches, page 7.
- ___ 5. Carefully read Part II, Analysis of Exam Areas, beginning on page 11.
- ___ 6. Strictly observing time allotments, take Practice Test Battery No. 1, section-by-section, beginning on page 37.
- ___ 7. Check your answers, page 83.
- ___ 8. Analyze your Practice Test Battery No. 1 results, page 86.
- ___ 9. Fill out the Tally Sheet for Problems Missed to pinpoint your mistakes, page 87.
- ___ 10. While referring to each item of Practice Test Battery No. 1, study ALL the Answers and Explanations that begin on page 91.
- ___ 11. Review as necessary basic skills and techniques discussed in Part II of this book.
- ___ 12. Selectively review fundamental formulas, terminology, and general information given in the Appendices of this book.
- ___ 13. Strictly observing time allotments, take Practice Test Battery No. 2, section-by-section, beginning on page 123.
- ___ 14. Check your answers, page 168.
- ___ 15. Analyze your Practice Test Battery No. 2 results, page 171.
- ___ 16. Fill out the Tally Sheet for Problems Missed to pinpoint your mistakes, page 172.
- ___ 17. While referring to each item of Practice Test Battery No. 2, study ALL the Answers and Explanations that begin on page 175.
- ___ 18. Again, review as needed Part II, Analysis of Exam Areas.
- ___ 19. Once more, selectively review essential information contained in the Appendices.
- ___ 20. CAREFULLY READ "FINAL PREPARATION" on page 254.

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Part I: Introduction

Part I: Introduction

FORMAT OF A RECENT ACT

Test 1: English Usage	40 minutes	75 questions
Test 2: Mathematics Usage	50 minutes	40 questions
Test 3: Social Studies	35 minutes	52 questions
Reading Comprehension		32-40 questions
General Knowledge		12-20 questions
Test 4: Natural Sciences	35 minutes	52 questions
Reading Comprehension		32-40 questions
General Knowledge		12-20 questions
Total Testing Time 160 minutes = 2 hours, 40 minutes		Approximately 219 Questions

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The ACT Assessment Program helps you to make important decisions about your future. It does so in two ways. First of all, The ACT Interest Inventory and the ACT Student Profile Section collect information about your past experiences, your interests, and your goals. You will fill out the Inventory and the Profile when you register for the ACT Assessment. The ACT Assessment is the second phase of the program; it is a test battery which you take at an ACT test center on a designated national test date. The tests cover four subject areas: English, mathematics, social studies, and natural sciences.

Four or five weeks after you take the ACT Assessment, your SPR (Student Profile Report) will be sent out. Recipients include the colleges and agencies you list on your registration folder, your high school counselor, and you (your counselor will receive an extra copy for you, unless you are not a high school student, in which case your copy will be sent to your home address). Your SPR contains the following: (1) your scores for the four academic tests; (2) an average of the four scores; (3) information about your experiences, your interests, and your goals; (4) a description of the individual characteristics of the colleges receiving your SPR—this information should assist you in choosing the best college for yourself; (5) a student guide which explains the information in your report.

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED ABOUT THE ACT

Q: WHO ADMINISTERS THE ACT?

A: The ACT is administered by the American College Testing Program. For further information about the ACT Assessment Program, write to ACTP, P.O. Box 168, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240, or call (319) 337-1000.

Q: WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF THE ACT ASSESSMENT?

A: The Assessment consists of four tests. The English Usage Test contains 75 items and lasts 40 minutes. The Mathematics Test contains 40 items and lasts 50 minutes. The Social Studies Reading Test contains 52 items and lasts 35 minutes. The Natural Sciences Reading Test contains 52 items and lasts 35 minutes. All four tests consist exclusively of multiple-choice questions.

Q: HOW IS THE ACT ASSESSMENT SCORED?

A: Each of the ACT tests is scored individually from 1 to 35, with the composite score being an average of the four individual test scores. This composite score is the most important factor in the acceptance decision. The maximum composite score is 35 and the minimum is 1, with an average being 20. Most ACT test-takers score between 15 and 25.

Q: HOW DO COLLEGES USE THE INFORMATION ON MY SPR?

A: Most colleges use the information on your Student Profile Report in two ways: (1) as part of the admission process, to assess your ability to do college-level work; (2) to help you plan your program of study.

Q: MAY I TAKE THE ACT MORE THAN ONCE?

A: Yes, you may. But if you retake the tests, you must complete all four pages of your registration folder once again. Taking the test more than once is not recommended.

Q: WHAT MATERIALS MAY I BRING TO THE ACT?

A: You may bring your test center admission form, fully completed; three sharpened No. 2 pencils; a good eraser; positive identification; and a watch. NO books, notes, slide rules, or calculators are permitted. Scratch paper for your figuring will be provided in the test booklet itself.

Q: MAY I CANCEL MY SCORE?

A: Yes. You may do so by notifying your test supervisor before you leave the examination.

Q: SHOULD I GUESS?

A: Yes. There is no penalty for guessing, so it is to your advantage to answer every question.

Q: HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR THE ACT?

A: Understanding and practicing test-taking strategies will help a great deal. Subject-matter review is particularly useful for the mathematics, social studies, and natural science sections. Both subject matter and strategies are covered in this book.

Q: HOW AND WHEN SHOULD I REGISTER?

A: The registration period opens about ten weeks before the test date and closes about four weeks before the test date. To register within this period, obtain an ACT registration/information booklet from your high school counselor, and follow the registration instruction it includes. Within three weeks after your registration folder has been received by ACTP, you will receive a test center admission form.

Q: HOW OFTEN IS THE TEST GIVEN?

A: The test is given five times a year, in October, December, February, April, and June. The test is regularly administered on a Saturday morning.

TAKING THE ACT: TWO SUCCESSFUL OVERALL APPROACHES

I. The "Plus-Minus" System

Many who take the ACT don't get their best possible score because they spend too much time on difficult questions, leaving insufficient time to answer the easy questions. Don't let this happen to you. Since every question within each section is worth the same amount, use the following system, *marking on your answer sheet*:

1. Answer easy questions immediately.
2. Place a "+" next to any problem that seems solvable but is too time-consuming.
3. Place a "-" next to any problem that seems impossible. Act quickly; don't waste time deciding whether a problem is a "+" or a "-".

After working all the problems you can do immediately, go back and work your "+" problems. If you finish them, try your "-" problems (sometimes when you come back to a problem that seemed impossible you will suddenly realize how to solve it).

Your answer sheet should look something like this after you finish working your easy questions:

1. Ⓐ ● Ⓒ Ⓜ
+2. Ⓕ Ⓢ Ⓜ Ⓡ
3. Ⓐ Ⓢ ● Ⓜ
-4. Ⓕ Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓡ
+5. Ⓐ Ⓢ Ⓒ Ⓜ

Make sure to erase your "+" and "-" marks before your time is up. The scoring machine may count extraneous marks as wrong answers.

II. The Elimination Strategy

Take advantage of being allowed to mark in your testing booklet. As you eliminate an answer choice from consideration, *make sure to mark it out in your question booklet* as follows:

- ~~(A)~~
?(B)
~~(C)~~
~~(D)~~
?(E)

Notice that some choices are marked with question marks, signifying that they may be possible answers. This technique will help you avoid reconsidering those choices you have already eliminated and will help you narrow down your possible answers.

These marks in your testing booklet do not need to be erased.

Many who take the ACT don't get their best possible score because they spend too much time on difficult questions, leaving insufficient time to answer the easy questions. Don't let this happen to you. Since every question within each section is worth the same amount, use the following system, working on your answer sheet:

1. Answer easy questions immediately.
2. Place a "+" next to any problem that seems solvable but is too time-consuming.
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After working all the problems you can do immediately go back and work your "+" problems. If you finish them, try your "-" problems (sometimes when you come back to a problem that seemed impossible you will suddenly realize how to solve it).

Your answer sheet should look something like this after you finish working your easy questions:

1	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
2	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
3	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
4	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
5	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙

Make sure to erase your "+" and "-" marks before your time is up. The scoring machine may count extraneous marks as wrong answers.

II. The Elimination Strategy

Take advantage of being allowed to mark in your testing booklet. As you eliminate an answer choice from consideration, make sure to mark it out in your question booklet as follows:

(A)
(B)
(C)
(D)
(E)

Part II: Analysis of Exam Areas

This section is designed to introduce you to each ACT area by carefully reviewing the—

1. Ability Tested
2. Basic Skills Necessary
3. Directions
4. Analysis of Directions
5. Suggested Approaches with Samples

This section emphasizes important test-taking techniques and strategies and how to apply them to a variety of problem types.