

Seven Basic Rules for Taking the ACT

1. Know the Instructions for Each Subject Test

Since you'll need all the time you can get, don't waste time reading the Subject Test instructions during the actual test. Learn the instructions beforehand by taking practice tests and reading our chapters on the Subject Tests.

2. Use Your Test Booklet as Scratch Paper

You should write down all your work for math problems, in case you want to return to them later to complete the question or check your answer. Making margin notes alongside the Reading and Science Reasoning passages can help you stay on track when answering the subsequent questions. In addition, if you want to skip a question and come back to it later, you should make a distinctive mark next to it, so you won't miss it on your second pass through the questions.

3. Answer Easy Questions before Hard Questions

Since all questions within a Subject Test are worth the same number of points, do not spend a long time on a difficult question because you might run out of time to complete the easier ones. Answer the easy and moderate questions first. That way you'll make sure that you get to see all the questions on the test that you have a good shot of getting right, while saving the leftover time for the difficult questions.

4. Don't Get Bugged Down by a Hard Question

If you've spent a significant amount of time on a problem (more than a minute and a half) and haven't gotten close to answering it, just let it go. You can come back to the problem after you've answered the easy ones. The time you spent on the problem earlier won't be wasted. When you come back to the problem, you'll already have done part of the work needed to solve it.

5. Avoid Carelessness

Speeding through the test can result in misinterpreting a question or missing a crucial piece of information. ACT writers often include tempting "partial answers" among the answer choices. A partial answer is the result of some, but not all, of the steps needed to solve a problem. If you rush through a question, you may mistake a partial answer for the real answer.

Don't assume that you cannot answer questions that appear to be complex. While some of these questions may actually be complex, some of them will be fairly simple questions disguised in complex-sounding terms. You should at least skim every question to see whether you have a feasible chance of answering it.

6. Be Careful Bubbling In Your Answers

Odd-numbered answers are lettered A, B, C, D (except on the Math Test, where they are A, B, C, D, E), and even-numbered answers are lettered F, G, H, J (except on the Math Test, where they are F, G, H, J, K). You may also want to try bubbling in groups (five at a time or a page at a time) rather than answering one by one. Circle the answers in the test booklet as you go through the page, and then transfer the answers over to the answer sheet as a group.

7. Always Guess When You Don't Know the Answer

You're much better off guessing than leaving an answer blank because there is no penalty for wrong answers.

<http://www.sparknotes.com/testprep/books/act/chapter2.rhtml>