

UNIT 1

ACT: Approaching the English Test

[English on actstudent.org](http://English.on.actstudent.org)

The five passages in the English test are not in any particular order. There is no order of difficulty or topics among the questions or passages, and there are no different types of passages. For standard-time students, learn to pace yourself to finish this test on time. Practice by doing individual passages in 9 minutes or less.

What's on the English Test?

- 40 questions about usage and mechanics — i.e., grammar and punctuation
- 35 questions testing your rhetorical skills — word choice, sentence construction, etc.

Basic grammar and punctuation rules are important.

You'll be asked many questions about fundamental grammar topics like verb tense, parallel construction, subject-verb agreement, run-on sentences, and pronouns, and about proper punctuation use with commas, apostrophes, dashes, colons, and semicolons.

Questions about organization, phrasing, and "sound" follow rules, too.

Don't think that you just have to go by "feel" on these questions. There are strategies for figuring out where a sentence should be placed within a paragraph; which phrase is the most relevant to include; and so on. There are learnable techniques for all of the ACT question types!

How should you do ACT English passages?

1. Start reading the passage. Never skip any portion of the passage.
2. When you get to a question, keep reading until the end of the sentence.
3. At the end of each sentence, answer any questions you passed.
4. Some questions, like "Should this sentence be deleted?", can't be answered until you've read the whole passage. If you see one of these, circle it and come back later.

As you read...

5. Notice any paragraphs with numbered sentences; they will be in brackets like [1], [2], and so on. This means there will *definitely* be a question about the ordering of sentences in that paragraph, or about where to insert a new sentence.
6. Notice anything that sounds weird! You can make a reminder mark, but don't answer a question before at least finishing sentence.
7. Err on the side of re-reading more than necessary — another few words of reading might give you the answer you need.