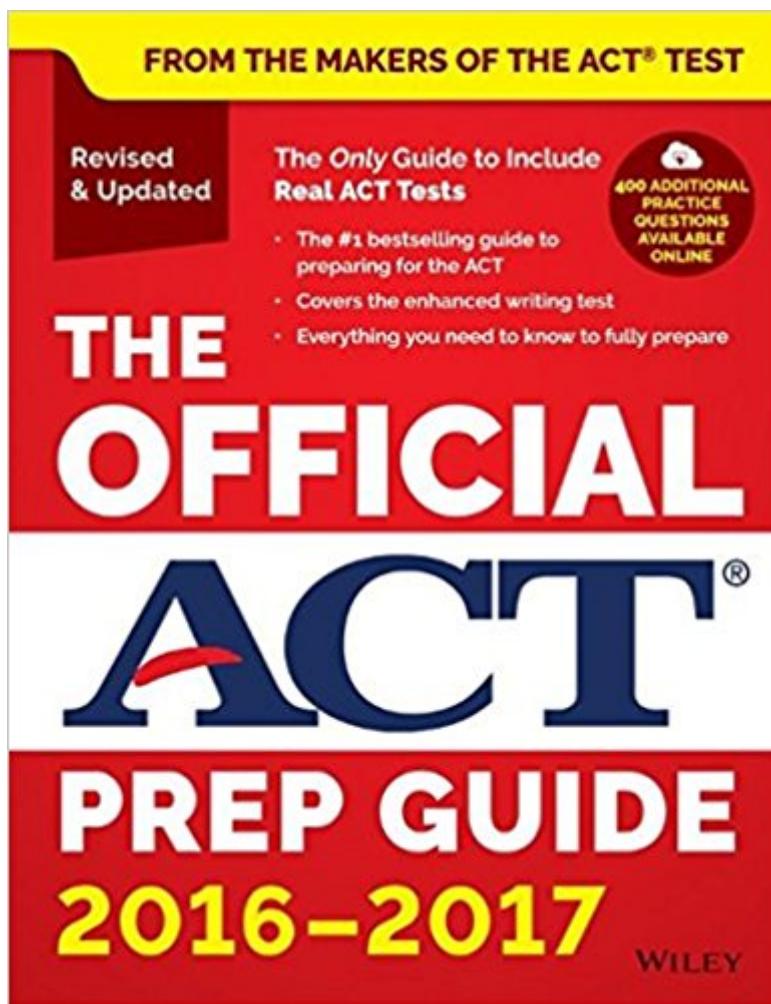


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# The Official ACT Prep Guide, 2016 - 2017



## Synopsis

Everything you need to know about the 2016-2017 ACT test, with real full-length practice tests from the makers of the ACT! The Official ACT Prep Guide 2016-2017 is the bestselling resource for students gearing up for the ACT test. This comprehensive guide walks you through the entire test experience, from registration through results, with expert advice straight from the test's creators. You'll find effective test-taking strategies, tips for boosting your score on the English, math, reading, and science tests, and detailed information on the enhanced optional writing test. Three new full-length practice tests help you assess your readiness so you can spot weak areas well in advance, and the ACT experts provide valuable advice on preparing both mentally and physically so you can manage anxiety and be fully confident on test day. You also get free online bonus content to help you start college on the right foot, including tips for preparing an application that gets noticed, getting into your first-choice school, being a successful student, and much more. The 2016-2017 version of the ACT guide includes a number of changes, including reading test sections with two shorter prose passages and the enhanced writing test's prompts. This guide provides a preview of what to expect for the entire exam, so you can go into the test feeling fully prepared and ready to excel. Get insider tips and strategies from the exam's creators Improve your score in all five content areas, including the optional writing test Practice with full-length test forms taken from the actual ACT Gear up for college with bonus online advice for a successful first year The ACT is different from other standardized tests. It tests your accumulated skills and knowledge, so sheer memorization and vocabulary lists are unproductive prep strategies. For preparation strategies that actually make a difference in your score and beyond go straight to the source with The Official ACT Prep Guide 2016-2017.

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## Customer Reviews

[View larger](#) You Got This: A Breakdown Of The Act Scores So you've decided to take the ACT test - great choice! The ACT is the leading US college admissions test, giving college admission departments a deeper look into your capabilities as a student and how prepared you are for college. In fact, some say your ACT scores hold greater value than your GPA in college admissions, so it's important to know how scores are measured, what to aim for, and how colleges and universities view your results. First, Breathe The ACT could very well be your ticket into the school of your dreams (no pressure!). You probably already have a good idea of what you're going to be tested on, but with so much riding on one test, it doesn't hurt to take a moment to review what's on the ACT. Quick ACT Refresher: Math: Preparing for Higher Math, Number & Quantity, Algebra, Functions, Geometry, Statistics & Probability, Integrating Essential Skills, and Modeling English: Grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, rhetoric Reading: Comprehension Science: Questions surrounding scientific charts, graphs, and research Writing: Essay (optional and does not contribute to your composite score)

It Doesn't Hurt to Guess: Read the question more than once Eliminate the most outlandish choices Analyze your remaining options Select the best two options and then choose one Keep in Mind: Although your scores will reflect your own strengths and areas of needed improvement, here are a few general things to keep in mind: \* A composite score of 21 is average. \* A composite score of 16 or below is considered low. \* Scores are solely based on the number of correct answers, so even if you don't know an answer, you should take a chance and guess. How You'll Be Scored The ACT is scored comprehensively, which means that each section is tallied individually and then averaged to create your composite score. Scores are intended to show your academic development and achievement, which means they are unique to each student. Your Composite Score Each section is graded on a scale of 1 to 36. This means your number of correct answers converts to a score that ranges from 1 to 36 for each of the four tests (English, math, reading, and science). Your composite score is the average of the scores on these sections. Remember, the writing section does not contribute to your composite score.

**Your Writing Scores** If you decide to take the writing test, your essay will be scored on a scale of 1 to 6 by two expert readers in each of the following four writing domains: \* Ideas and analysis. \* Development and support. \* Organization. \* Language use and conventions. Readers will assess how well you applied these four domains, which represent the essential skills and abilities you need to meet the writing demands of college. To break it down a bit more, the writing test is intended to see how well you can: \* State ideas and introduce other perspectives. \* Develop ideas with supporting evidence. \* Organize thoughts logically. \* Express ideas through proper English. If the readers disagree by more than one point, a third reader will be called in to evaluate the essay for fairness. The two scores for each domain will be added together, and your total writing score is the average of your four domain scores rounded to the nearest whole number.

**Your Score Report** **The Waiting Game** You can view your scores online as soon as two weeks after taking the ACT. Score reports are released within three to eight weeks after the test date. If you take the writing test, your score report will be available only after ALL of your scores - including your writing score - are ready, usually within five to eight weeks after taking the test. **Making Sense of it All** After you've taken the ACT, your scores are analyzed and calculated, and then reported on your ACT Student Score Report. Here's how to make sense of it all and see where you stand: \* Correct answers are counted in each of the four subjects. You will also see college readiness information so you can tell if your scores meet or fall short of these expectations. \* Your composite score is determined by averaging the scores from each of the four subject areas (not including your writing score). You can see how well you did in each subject by viewing the detailed results which show the total number and types of questions asked, how many you got right, and the percentage of correct answers. \* You can compare your scores to US and state rankings broken down by composite and subject scores. **Sending Your Scores** You can automatically send your ACT score report to four schools for free, if you select this option at the time of registration. However, you can always add more schools after you complete the exam and receive your scores.

National Averages: English: 20.3 Math: 20.9 Reading: 21.3 Science: 20.8  
Composite: 21 Writing: 17.2

**How Colleges Use Your Scores**

Admissions ACT scores aren't the only thing schools look at, but they are at the top of the list. Course Placement Many colleges look at your score report to see which level of a course you'll excel in: developmental,

regular, or advanced. Academic Advising Your scores can help counselors identify areas where you may need assistance and help determine the best route to get there. Scholarships and Student Loans Colleges and scholarship agencies may use your ACT scores to evaluate your eligibility for scholarships, loans, and financial aid.

The Only Guide to Include Real ACT Tests The #1 bestselling guide to preparing for the ACT Covers the enhanced writing test Everything you need to know to fully prepare The comprehensive guide to this year's ACT test, with real full-length practice tests The Official ACT Prep Guide is the bestselling resource for students getting ready to take the ACT test. Step by step, the book walks you through the entire test experience from registration to getting the final results. No matter what your style of learning, this handy resource is filled with a variety of effective test-taking strategies. The Official ACT Prep Guide and the companion ACT Online Prep, includes three actual ACT tests, all of which contain the optional writing test, which you can use for stress-free practice. To help in your review of the test material, the guide also gives clear explanations for every answer. The combination of the practice tests and the clarifying answers will help you understand what to expect when you take the actual ACT® test. In addition, the guide includes ideas for boosting your score on the English, math, reading, and science tests and detailed information on the enhanced optional writing test. Filled with expert advice from the test's creators, the guide gives you the know-how to: Review the entire content of the ACT Understand the procedures you'll follow when you're actually taking the ACT Be prepared for the types of questions you can expect to find on the test Approach the various questions with confidence Adopt the test-taking technique that's right for you Once you complete the practice tests you can relax and concentrate on doing your best. By using the strategies outlined in The Official ACT Prep Guide, your performance on the test will best reflect your overall preparation and achievement in the areas it measures. As an added bonus, the ACT experts provide valuable advice on preparing both mentally and physically so you can manage anxiety and be fully confident on test day.

ACT is a not-for-profit organization providing assessment, research, information, and program management services to support education and workforce development.

I'm a Harvard graduate, SAT/ACT perfect scorer and full-time tutor who has taught the ACT for nearly 20 years. We've been waiting since 2011 for a newer edition of this book, and at long last, it's here: the included 3 tests reflect the minor changes to the ACT Reading and

Science portions, and most importantly, the major changes to the new ACT essay (Writing) section. All 3 exams also include answer explanations, and for the first time ever, the book is also offered as an instant digital download from the Kindle store at a discounted price. (Although the Kindle version--accessible not just for Kindle owners but on nearly any device with a screen--is admittedly very convenient and environmentally friendly, I would still recommend that you buy the physical book, because the actual ACT is still a paper-based test.) The Official ACT Prep Guide 2016-2017 (formerly the Real ACT Prep Guide) continues to be the most essential preparation guide for the ACT, because it is the only source of official test questions—the practice ACTs in all other books are nothing more than subpar imitations of the real thing. Seeing that this updated version of the ACT has already been around since the September 2015 administration of the exam, the publication of this book is long overdue—but it’s better late than never. Unfortunately, this most recent edition of the "Big Red Book" contains only 3 updated tests, and those tests include many recycled questions from the previous (3rd) edition, as well as from the April and June 2015 versions of the ACT, which is why I’m removing one star from my review (I was awfully tempted to remove two), but again, that’s better than only 1 new test (google “Preparing for the ACT Test 2016” for links), which until now is all that was available. Combine the 3 tests in this book with the 5 tests in the Real ACT Prep Guide, 3rd Edition—the Real ACT Prep Guide (Book + Bonus Online Content), (Reprint) (Official Act Prep Guide), and the free online test mentioned above, and you’ve got 9 official ACT tests total. Then, combine those 9 tests with the 3 older ACTs available for free download (google “ACT Action Plan - McElroy Tutoring” for links), and you’ve got a healthy dose of 12 official practice exams that should be sufficient for a full ACT preparation. In addition, professional ACT tutors like me will often have a collection of additional real ACT exams at their disposal, compiled from past years' exams that were publicly released, but neither sold at retail nor available for download. It is true that any publicly released exams prior to the December 2015 version of the test, including the 5 ACT exams from the 3rd edition, are now (slightly) outdated, especially the old essay sections (Writing Test), which should be ignored, but given that the vast majority of the ACT exam has stayed the same, these older versions of the test are still quite helpful for practice, despite the significant question overlap. Think of the 3rd edition as a book full of practice questions rather than a book full of diagnostic tests—the score prediction element is lost due to the question overlap, but there are still plenty of unique questions and additional opportunities for learning. It's not a perfect solution, and yes, it would be nice to be able to practice with 12 distinct ACTs instead of 4 new ones and 8 old ones with a significant number of overlapping questions, but for now it’s the best we

have, and it's the highest number of real ACTs that have ever been available for retail purchase and/or download. Let's hope for another batch of updated tests to be released sometime before the end of 2016, but again, 4 ACTs in the new format is far better than only 1.

**QUICK SUMMARY OF THE STRUCTURAL CHANGES TO THE NEW ACT:** English - exactly the same (45 minutes, 75 questions). Mostly grammar, paragraph structure and punctuation. Math - exactly the same (60 minutes, 60 questions). A broad survey of high-school math, with questions ordered from easy to hard. Reading - almost exactly the same (35 minutes, 40 questions), but the new ACT now includes Dual Passages (google "Preparing for the ACT Test 2016" open the PDF, and scroll to pages 36-38 for an example of what the dual passage looks like). Curiously, the third test in this book does not include a Dual Reading passage, but the first two tests do. Science - almost exactly the same (35 minutes, 40 questions, mostly data interpretation and graphs/charts), but you are now given 6 passages instead of the traditional 7. Writing (Essay) section - much different! Instead of 30 minutes to write, you are now given 40 minutes, and instead of being given only a prompt and an assignment, you will now be provided with a prompt, an assignment, and three different perspectives on the essay. You are then asked to evaluate all three perspectives on the issue, to provide your own perspective, and to explain the relationship between your own opinion and the three opinions provided, using examples, analysis and logic. (In the words of the ACT, students are asked "to develop an argument that puts their own perspective in dialogue with others.") The new essay will be scored out of 36 points instead of 12. It will also be given a grade of 2-12 in the following areas: Ideas and Analysis, Development and Support, Organization, & Language Use and Conventions. I've been hearing plenty of stories about ACT students getting very low essay (Writing) scores relative to their other scores. Ignore the essay at your own peril! (There are three brand-new essay topics in this book.) Also, please note that the ACT essay is optional, but that many colleges either require or recommend it, so be forewarned if you are planning on skipping that portion of the test. When it comes time to re-try the questions you answered incorrectly, I recommend that you either buy a 2nd copy of the physical book to keep blank, or that you print out fresh copies of the questions using the Kindle version (this option is not currently offered on Kindle, so you may have to find a way to convert to PDF first, or simply take screenshots of the pages you need, using the desktop version of the Kindle software). It's what I call a "blind review": going over all the questions you got wrong without first checking the correct answer/explanation, or seeing any of your previous work. In my opinion, blind review is one of the key facets of effective test prep. Thus, you should only mark your answers as correct or incorrect (this is easier when working with a partner). Most importantly, don't indicate the correct answers on

the test before you get a chance to review them. In contrast, if you go over questions by checking the correct answers right away, then you can fool yourself into thinking that you understand them fully, when in fact you are still prone to those types of mistakes. The best way to know for sure is to try the questions again, from scratch, \*without\* the aid of the answer key or the answer explanations. Only then should you confirm the correct answer and read the explanation provided.

**SAT vs. ACT:** These days, many students prefer the ACT to the SAT. The Official SAT Study Guide (2016 Edition) (Official Study Guide for the New Sat). But the College Board has been fighting back by inflating SAT scores and making other efforts to make the SAT more palatable for students. For example, one major reason to consider taking the New SAT instead of (or in addition to) the ACT is that the SAT allows you more time per question than does the ACT. Thus, if time management is a major issue, then the SAT might be a better test for you:

SAT Reading = 1.25 minutes per question (75 seconds)  
ACT Reading = .875 minutes per question (52.5 seconds)  
SAT Grammar (Writing and Language) = .8 minutes per question (48 seconds)  
ACT Grammar (English) = .6 minutes per question (36 seconds)  
SAT Math = 1.4 minutes per question (83 seconds)  
ACT Math = 1 minute per question (60 seconds)

Here are my top recommendations for ACT Practice and Strategy:

- 1) This Book.
- 2) The Free Online Practice Test from ACT (google "Preparing for the ACT 2016")
- 3) The Real ACT Prep Guide, 3rd Edition: The Real ACT Prep Guide (Book + Bonus Online Content), (Reprint) (Official Act Prep Guide)
- 4) The Real ACT (CD) 3rd Edition (Official Act Prep Guide)
- 5) The 3 other Official ACTs available for free online (google "ACT Action Plan - McElroy Tutoring")
- 6) The Ultimate Guide to the Math ACT: Ultimate Guide to the Math ACT
- 7) For the Love of ACT Science: For the Love of ACT Science: An innovative approach to mastering the science section of the ACT standardized exam
- 8) Mighty Oak Guide to Mastering the ACT Essay: Mighty Oak Guide to Mastering the 2016 ACT Essay: For the new (2016-) 36-point ACT essay
- 9) The Complete Guide to ACT Reading: The Complete Guide to ACT Reading
- 10) The Complete Guide to ACT English: The Complete Guide to ACT English, 2nd Edition
- 11) ACT Quantum Free Math Videos - explanations to every question in the 3rd edition of the Real ACT prep guide, plus the 4 additional tests available online

12) Barron's ACT, 2nd Edition: Barron's ACT, 2nd Edition (Book Only)

For those of you who will be taking the ACT with accommodations, you should also know that extended time is more flexible than on the SAT. On the SAT, extended time is allocated on a per-section basis, but on the ACT with extended time, you are given 6 hours to allocate your time among the sections however you choose, so long as you complete each section in the order provided. You can not go back after you've finished a section, but you can, for example,

take much longer on the sections that are difficult for you. This feature is a definite plus for those who are approved for extended time, but some have suggested that the scoring curve may have become tougher on the ACT in recent years as a result. Thus, it's nice to have some newer tests with updated score conversions that more closely reflect the current demographics of the test. The ACT is administered six times a year, on varying days: September, October, December, February, April and June. Three times a year, the ACT offers what's called the Test Information Release (TIR), which--unlike the other test dates--allows you to order an actual (paper) copy of the questions, along with your answers. Sign up for the Test Information Release in advance if you can--it costs extra, and takes about six weeks from the time you receive your scores online, but it's still worth it. (You can also order a copy of your essay afterward, which requires an additional form and fee.) Currently the TIR is offered in December, April and June. Thus, these are the best three months to take the test, because otherwise there will no way to review your incorrectly answered questions. Good luck with your studies! Please leave any questions or comments below and I will be sure to respond.

This is very disappointing, made worse by the fact that you should definitely buy this anyway. I have been a tutor for 15 years and owned my own SAT/ACT prep company for about the last 10 of those years, so I'm intimately familiar with this book, and all of its past versions. The advice portion of this book is fine. Not amazing. Helps you know what to expect if you've never seen it before, which is good. But it's mostly all very, very long winded ways of saying, "Hey, you should practice math, learn your grammar, and read more accurately." All of which is to say: practice! This is not revolutionary advice, here. So the practice tests are far (far far far far far) and away the most useful aspect of this book, and I'll spend most of my time reviewing those. First, the good news. The first two practice tests in this book are (finally!!) an updated version of the ACT ... mostly, at least. (The second test recycles some very old math problems from previous editions.) This new material includes compare/contrast Reading passages, which have been around for a while on the actual ACT but not available for practice in any of the official practice books until now. So that's nice. The other sections -- English, Math, and Science -- also seem to have been updated to be on par with the difficulty of the current test. Anyone who practiced with the earlier editions was in for a small shock on test day when the math and science were noticeably harder than what the official practice book had showed; this book fixes that problem on the first two exams. The essay prompts have been updated to reflect the new version, too. Now the bad news. First of all, why in the world did we drop from five practice tests in the previous edition down to three? As I mentioned, these tests are the biggest value in the book, and 40% of that value is gone from previous editions. And that would

be bad enough if all three tests were awesome updated material, but the third test... goodness, the third test is a ridiculous insult. The third test is still the freakin' old version!! What are you doing, Wiley?! Such an unforced error. It's a virtual copy of Test 4 from previous editions, it does NOT contain a compare/contrast reading section, and with the exception of a few stray math questions that have been altered or moved, the whole thing is a mostly useless, outdated mess. To add insult to injury, they managed to screw up the formatting, and in the reading and science sections, they printed the passages on odd pages and the questions themselves on the following page ... meaning you're flipping that damn page back and forth a million times. Super annoying, and not analogous to test day, when flipping occurs but is minimized. One blank page on page 471 would've fixed this. There are blank pages elsewhere, so it's not like they didn't get the concept. It took me five seconds to figure this out. Apparently, it's going to take Wiley (at least) two editions. So, to sum up: the first two practice tests are worth the price of admission, because you absolutely need to practice with true source material and this is the one and only spot you'll legally find it. Other companies' books are sometimes decent imitations when you just need more work, but they always feel a bit off ... sort of like when you can tell that a photocopy of a photocopy just isn't like the original, even if you can't put your finger on why. So you \*have\* to buy this book, because they have a monopoly on the original material. But you will be left wanting much, much more. The third test is better than nothing in the strictest sense, but it stinks. And the fourth and fifth tests no longer exist (if you were willing to reprint old material, why not at least chuck in another test or two for kicks??). My final advice: buy this book. Do the first practice test. Save the second test. Use as much other material as you'd like (i.e. the third test in this book, Princeton Review books, Kaplan, etc) as practice material knowing that they're not quite the real deal, but it's better than nothing. Then take second test to see how you've come along before test day. In other words, bookend your prep with tests one and two, which are the only practice ACTs available out there that are truly accurate to the current version. Good luck to all the students out there! You'll get through this eventually, and this book is here to (kinda) help you.

Do you need it? Not sure. But it's like going into uncharted territory without the official GPS. Does this do it all? No, it is limited in breadth and depth. It is overpriced for what it is. but this entire process from prep to testing for High School students is overpriced. My perspective was that no one book does it all, and you may as well have the "Official" one so that you are not steered in the wrong direction. I bought this book with the 5Lb book of Practice Problems and between the two of them, I believe that I am getting strategy and substance.

As other reviewers have noted, this book's material seems to be comprised of old material from exams in past editions and some material found in tests released in the last 2 years. Amazingly, the tests are all labelled as "2015-2016" exams, even though much of the text was actually released a half-decade ago, or more. The limited amount of content allows test-takers access to less material and misleads test-takers with indications that the practice exams are from the past year, which is simply not the case. In any other field, this would be fraudulent (Imagine, for example, a car dealership taking a 2008 Toyota Corolla, replacing some older components, and labelling it a 2015 model). In the world of standardized testing, this kind of question manufacturing is likely referred to as productive efficiency. The only reason to purchase this text is that the three exams present do reflect the real exam, and the text does have explanations for each problem. However, you would be better served finding an older copy of the book and downloading any of the available practice tests (.pdfs) that are floating around the web from past years. That way, you would be able to maximize the amount of material to practice on.

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