

Enhanced ACT Primer

Pick your path, lock the new clocks, decide Science early. Prompts tutor between official timed sections — not instead of them.

Standalone printable workbook · Not a screenshot of the site. Live prompts: testlessons.com/tests/act/

What the Enhanced ACT Is

The Enhanced ACT is ACT's current college admissions exam. The scored composite averages three core multiple-choice sections—English, Math, and Reading (each reported 1–36). Science and Writing are optional and are not in the default composite. The test is linear (not adaptive like the Digital SAT): section clocks and question counts are the whole game.

Live Enhanced timings (not classic ACT nostalgia): English 35 min / 50 Q, Math 50 min / 45 Q, Reading 40 min / 36 Q; optional Science 40 min / 40 Q. Official ACT timed practice is score truth; our prompts tutor skills between those sets. Decide Science early against your college list. If the format is already clear, jump to Start Here and pick a path.

Start Here · Pick One Path

No Baseline Yet

When: First Enhanced ACT cycle, or no full timed practice yet

Tonight:

- ☐ Book a quiet block for a full core practice (English + Math + Reading ≈ 2h 5m + breaks/setup)
- ☐ Use official ACT practice timing — not last decade's 75/60 question clocks
- ☐ After scores: write composite + section scores below; run Overview + Science? prompts

Official first: Official ACT full-length (or section sets) before heavy AI drill volume

Have a Score · 4–10 Weeks Out

When: At least one timed practice composite (or solid section scores) in hand

Tonight:

- ☐ Paste section scores into the Score Plan prompt brackets
- ☐ Tag misses: conceptual / process / careless / timing — pick top two
- ☐ If Science still undecided, finish the Science worksheet + Science? prompt this week

Official first: Next full or multi-section timed practice on the calendar (~every 1–2 weeks)

Final 2 Weeks

When: ≤ 14 days to test day

Tonight:

- [] Stop opening new content rabbit holes and classic-ACT pacing drills
- [] Run Test Day prompt for logistics + light review only
- [] One light mixed set max; protect sleep and section clocks you already own

Official first: No brand-new full-length in the last 2–3 days unless you still need timing calm

Your Plan (write in pen)

Test date _____

Baseline — Eng _____ Math _____ Read _____ Composite _____

Science plan (yes / no / maybe) + score if taken _____

Target composite (from college mid-50%^s / concordance — not a round fantasy) _____

Hours per week you will actually do _____

Top 2 miss tags (conceptual / process / careless / timing) _____

Path circled above (No Baseline Yet / Have a Score / Final 2 Weeks) _____

Enhanced ACT only. Full history lives on the site primer page. Classic 75Q English / 60Q Math clocks will mis-train you.

New Clocks First

The Enhanced ACT is linear (not Digital SAT adaptive). Your job is section pacing on the live question counts—not nostalgia for an older sibling's form. Composite averages English, Math, and Reading only.

- English: 35 min · 50 Q (40 scored) — grammar, usage, rhetoric on short texts
- Math: 50 min · 45 Q (41 scored) — pre-algebra through intro trig; calculator allowed
- Reading: 40 min · 36 Q (27 scored) — four passage types (not a 35-min myth)
- Science (optional): 40 min · 40 Q (34 scored) — data, experiments, viewpoints — not a biology cram
- Writing (optional): separate essay score; not in composite
- Composite = average of English + Math + Reading (each 1–36); no wrong-answer penalty
- Core testing ≈ 2h 5m before Science/Writing options; field-test items are embedded — don't overfit oddballs

Science · Yes / No / Maybe

Science is optional and is not in the default composite. Decide early so you don't bleed core E/M/R hours into FOMO lab graphs—or skip a STEM signal your colleges want.

- ☐ List colleges you care about: do any require/recommend ACT Science or a science score?
- ☐ STEM major / scholarship that wants a science signal? Lean yes and schedule Science practice.
- ☐ If no college needs it and composite is the bottleneck: protect English/Math/Reading hours.
- ☐ Maybe = recheck applications in 2 weeks; until then, keep light Science exposure only if time remains.
- ☐ If yes: train figures + conflicting viewpoints under 40 min — not memorizing AP Bio chapters.

Hub tab Science? → science-decision prompt. Revisit after each score report.

Set a Real Composite Target

Composite is the average of English, Math, and Reading—your lowest section drags the number. Pull each college's ACT mid-50% (or SAT concordance if they publish SAT only). Bands below are context only, not

guarantees.

20–23 Solid average band — build consistency and cut careless errors	28–31 Competitive for many selective schools — tighten weak section	33–36 Elite band — precision + hard-item stamina
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Prep Principles

- Official ACT practice tests beat random third-party volume for score prediction.
- Train the Enhanced timing—older 75/60/40 question habits can mis-pace you.
- Decide Science early: if colleges you care about want it (or you need a STEM signal), practice it; otherwise protect core composite study time.
- Error logs > re-reading explanations passively.
- Use AI prompts to tutor skills; verify gains on official or high-quality timed sections.

For Parents (90 seconds)

- Official ACT practice is the thermometer. AI chat is a tutor between timed sections—not a fake proctor.
- Buy Enhanced-current materials. Old books that drill classic timings or “required Science for everyone” waste months.
- Help decide Science with the college list—not vibes. If schools don’t need it, protect composite study time.
- Calendar: full timed blocks, sleep, admission ticket, calculator if they use one. Encouragement > score lectures.
- Still choosing SAT vs ACT? testlessons.com/tests/sat-vs-act/ before two prep piles.

High-ROI Traps

Classic clocks will punish you

Training 75-question English or old Math counts builds the wrong pace. Every timed set should match Enhanced minutes and item counts.

Science FOMO vs composite math

Optional Science is not free points if it steals hours from a weak English or Math section that actually sits in the composite.

Science ≠ content dump

When you take it, score comes from reading graphs, experiments, and conflicting viewpoints under time—not memorizing a science textbook.

Linear exam: no adaptive bailout

There is no Module 2 routing. A slow first half of a section just eats the clock. Build section-level pacing checkpoints.

AI items ≠ official difficulty

Use prompts to explain and plan. Trust official ACT timed practice for score signal.

Default Path · ~8 Weeks

Week 1 · Baseline + map

- [] One full timed practice (at least English + Math + Reading core)
- [] Build miss log: conceptual / process / careless / timing
- [] Decide Science yes / no / maybe (worksheet + Science? prompt)
- [] Run Overview prompt; write composite target from college mid-50%^s

Week 2 · English foundation

- [] Daily ~20 min conventions + rhetoric on Enhanced short texts
- [] One timed English (35 min / 50 Q — train this clock, not classic 75Q)
- [] Log misses; repair top English tags only

Week 3 · Math foundation

- [] Algebra/functions block + geometry/trig block under a timer
- [] One timed Math (50 min / 45 Q); calculator allowed throughout
- [] Practice or Weak Area prompt on the messiest Math tag

Week 4 · Reading systems

- [] Passage-mapping drills (four passage types)
- [] Evidence-from-passage discipline — no outside-knowledge leaps
- [] One timed Reading (40 min / 36 Q — not the old 35-min rumor)

Week 5 · Weak-section intensive

- [] Weak Area prompt plan for lowest section (composite drag)
- [] 2–3 timed sections on that weak area only
- [] Mid-point full core practice; refresh Score Plan with new numbers

Week 6 · Science or composite polish

- [] If Science = yes: data + experiments + conflicting viewpoints (not bio cram)
- [] If Science = no: mixed English/Math/Reading under true clocks
- [] Pacing checkpoints each section — linear exam, no Module 2 bailout

Week 7 · Full tests + repair

- [] Another full practice at real Enhanced timing
- [] Repair top 3 miss tags only — no random new books
- [] Light mixed drills; Strategies prompt if process is the leak

Week 8 · Taper + test day

- [] Short drills only on personal error patterns
- [] Logistics checklist + Test Day prompt
- [] Sleep priority — stop cramming new content

Miss Log (copy rows as needed)

After every timed section or full-length: log misses. Repair the top two tags before random new topics.

* Tags: conceptual · process · careless · timing

Date	Section	Tag*	What I missed	Fix tomorrow

Prompt Map (hub tabs)

testlessons.com/tests/act/ — copy the full prompt, fill [brackets] with messy truth. Official timed sections remain score truth.

Overview: Enhanced format still fuzzy / parent reading along

Done when: You can state E/M/R clocks, optional Science/Writing, and what composite includes

Score Plan: Baseline in hand; need a weekly plan

Done when: Hours mapped to lowest composite section; next full practice dated

Science?: Still choosing Science

Done when: Yes/no/maybe written on Your Plan with college list reason

Practice: Mixed skill drill between full practices

Done when: Timed Enhanced-format set done; misses tagged in the log

Weak Area: One section or miss-tag is dragging composite

Done when: Focused repair set; fewer repeats of the same tag next timed section

Strategies: Pacing / process habits

Done when: 1–2 section rules you will actually run (checkpoints, skip rules)

Test Day: Final 72 hours

Done when: Logistics done; light review only; sleep protected

Final 72 Hours

- ☐ Know which sections you registered for (Science? Writing?) — matches how you practiced
- ☐ Admission ticket / school instructions printed or saved offline
- ☐ Allowed calculator ready if you use one; charged devices only if your site allows them for other tools
- ☐ Break plan per admission ticket / center rules (food/water if allowed)
- ☐ Know start time, arrival time, ID rules
- ☐ Light review of YOUR miss-log patterns only — no new textbooks or classic-ACT drills
- ☐ Run Test Day prompt once if logistics or anxiety are messy
- ☐ Sleep > extra full-length the night before

Why the Score Still Matters (short)

Published research — not a score guarantee. Schools use multiple factors.

What To Do With This

- Pick a composite target, then raise your lowest section—it drags the average.
- Practice at real Enhanced ACT timing; build an error log by section and skill.
- Retest only after a deliberate repair cycle, not right after a bad day.

Sources

1. Allensworth, E. M., & Clark, K. (2020). High school GPAs and ACT scores as predictors of college completion: Examining assumptions about consistency across high schools. *Educational Researcher*, 49(3), 198–211. (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X20902110>)
2. American Educational Research Association. (2020). Research finds that high school GPAs are stronger predictors of college graduation than ACT scores (press summary of Allensworth & Clark). (<https://www.aera.net/Newsroom/Research-Finds-that-High-School-GPAs-Are-Stronger-Predictors-of-College-Graduation-than-ACT-Scores>)
3. ACT Research. Investigating test prep impact on score gains using quasi-experimental methods (R1710). Notes meta-analytic coaching effects near -0.25 SD for SAT-like achievement tests and discusses ACT-scale implications. (<https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/R1710-investigating-test-prep-impact-2018-07.pdf>)
4. Bangert-Drowns, R. L., Kulik, J. A., & Kulik, C.-L. C. (1983). Effects of coaching programs on achievement test performance. *Review of Educational Research*, 53(4), 571–585. (Often cited coaching ES $\approx .25$ for achievement-test coaching syntheses.) (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/00346543053004571>)

Next On The Site

1. Circle your path on page 1 and fill Your Plan
2. Open the hub prompt that matches this week (see Prompt Map)
3. Self-Assess if you want a quick path quiz: testlessons.com/tests/act/approach/
4. SAT vs ACT still open? testlessons.com/tests/sat-vs-act/

Open prompts: testlessons.com/tests/act/ · Self-Assess: testlessons.com/tests/act/approach/ · SAT vs ACT: testlessons.com/tests/sat-vs-act/

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