

ACT: Reading

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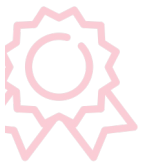
VISION

To create a world-class educational system that gives students the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and the workforce, and to flourish as parents and citizens

MISSION

To provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global community





1

ALL Students Proficient and Showing Growth in All Assessed Areas

EVERY School Has Effective Teachers and Leaders

4



2

EVERY Student Graduates from High School and is Ready for College and Career

EVERY Community Effectively Uses a World-Class Data System to Improve Student Outcomes

5



3

EVERY Child Has Access to a High-Quality Early Childhood Program

EVERY School and District is Rated "C" or Higher

6



Structure

What does the Reading section look like?

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- 40 questions in 35 minutes
- 4 passages, each around 800 words
- Each section may be one long or two shorter (paired) passages.
- 10 questions for each passage, based on what was directly stated and any meanings that were implied in the text

Prose Fiction/Literary Narrative

Based on passages from short stories, novels, memoirs, and personal essays

Social Studies

Content areas of anthropology, archaeology, biography, business, economics, education, geography, history, political science, psychology, and sociology

Humanities/Arts

Content areas of architecture, art, dance, ethics, film, language, literary criticism, music, philosophy, radio, television, and theatre

Natural Sciences

Content areas of anatomy, biology, botany, chemistry, ecology, geology, medicine, meteorology, microbiology, natural history, physiology, physics, technology, and zoology

- There are ALWAYS 4 passages; they are ALWAYS in the same order.
- Practice reading the passages and find an order that works for you.
- Passage 1 is fiction – be concerned with people, events, places, emotions, and relationships.
- Passages 2,3,4 are nonfiction – be concerned with a big Idea/problem.

- ~800 words per passage
- Each passage has a set of 10 questions
- 2 passages are very complex (higher collegiate)
- 1 passage is complex (lower collegiate)
- 1 passage is moderate (upper high school)

Strategy

- For many the reading section proves to be the most difficult, because the time limit makes it extremely difficult to accurately read the passages provided.
- There are many different tricks and tips to improving your reading score, but reading frequency proves to be the biggest factor to improving your reading score.
 - You don't have to read more novels.
 - You do have to read more!
 - Read about topics you like ... and occasionally read above your level. Even if you can only get through a little bit of a very difficult text, you are still improving your ability to read.

- Everyone is different.
- Everyone reads differently.
- No one strategy or technique works for everyone.
- Try different strategies until you find one that works
 - Best advice to Freshman is to read, read, read!
 - Most students scoring 28+ are probably reading the entire passage and working questions because they are good readers.
 - Most 4.0 students who do poorly in this section have made high grades by using coping mechanisms.
 - Average adult reads 250 words per minute, so try to spend only 2-3 minutes reading.

Things You Can Control:

- Reading order (your preferences)
- Start with your favorite passage type and finish w/ your least favorite
or
- Start with your least favorite and save the best for last!

Things You Cannot Control:

- Placement of A/B passage
- Complexity of the passages

- ACT reading isn't like what you are asked to do in English classes!
 - Read every word
 - Slow and deliberate pace
 - Trying to remember as much as possible
 - Retaining for your test
- These skills aren't always the most useful on the ACT.
- Remember that you won't be tested on this passage again, so get what you need and get out of there.

- Authors typically try to help the reader see where he or she is going. Often, they leave “structural clues” to help you see what is important or how important something is.
- It is important to pay attention to the structural clues because they will give you hints as to what the author wants you to see.
- This will also help you to see the logic behind what they author is saying.

- Indicating a Contrast
 - But
 - However
 - On the other hand
 - Nevertheless
- Indicating a Continuation with a Similar or Complementary Thought
 - Moreover
 - Furthermore
 - ; (the semi-colon)
- Indicating a Conclusion
 - Therefore
 - Thus
- Indicating Reasons for a Conclusion
 - Since
 - Because of
 - Due to
- Indicating an Example or Illustration
 - For instance
 - For example

- Three-Step Method:
 - Actively read the passage; take notes as you go
 - Examine the question for clues
 - Predict the answer, and select the choice closest to your prediction
- Find and Paraphrase
- Skipping Questions
- Skimming vs. Scanning

- Unlike the English portion, you should read the passage before scouting the questions.
- Use the structural clues to anticipate how the parts of the passage fit together. In this reading your main goals should be:
 - Understand the gist of the passage
 - Obtain an overall idea of how the passage is organized so that it will be easier to refer to later
 - Map the passage!!!!!!

- Close Reading
 - Locate and interpret details
 - Draw conclusions
- Central Ideas, Themes, and Summaries
 - Determine main idea/purpose of a paragraph, paragraphs, or a passage
- Relationships
 - Understand sequence of events
 - Understand cause-effect relationship
 - Understand comparative relationship (compare/contrast)

Passage Map Tips/Method

- Marking up a passage is an important skill to have regardless if you are reading for the ACT or for your English teacher.
- This is a way of taking notes while you are reading so that when you need to refer back to the text (say to study for your final) all you must do is look at your notes.
- Tips:
 - Read a paragraph quickly, then pause to think, then write the main idea of the paragraph out in the margin. This of this as giving each paragraph a title.
 - Underlining, circling, striking through, etc. All of these are good tool in passage mapping. Come up with your own way of doing it. Assign certain tools specific duties.
 - Circling=main ideas
 - Underlining=tonal words
 - Strike through details so that main ideas stand out more
 - These are just some ideas
 - Number paragraphs out to the side as you read
 - Make an outline in the margin

- The stem of the question provides two very important clues.
 - Structural clues
 - As stated in the passage
 - The author believes (always)
 - The author suggests (inference)
 - Beware of “always” and other exclusive words
 - Make use of line references
- Think about the question without the looking at the answer choices ... do you have an idea of what the correct answer should be?

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- Finally, predict the answer!
 - This helps you focus on your thinking and not what the ACT test makers want you to think about ... oh shiny things.

- It's helpful to know how the questions will be asked.
- There are 5 main types of questions in the reading section:
 - Big Picture
 - Detail
 - Vocab/Context
 - Development and Function
 - Inference

- **Type 1: Big Picture Questions**

- Big picture questions look for **the subject of the passage or the narrator's point of view, opinion, or purpose**. These ask you to look at the passage as a whole rather than focusing on a portion of the text.

- **Example of a big picture question:**

The main theme of this passage concerns the:

- A.** difficulty of first starting and then maintaining a friendship.
- B.** process of making a new friend and how the friendship changes the narrator.
- C.** problems the narrator has dealing with the loss of her former neighbors.
- D.** differences in the lives led by two pairs of adults who at different times lived in the same house.

- Detail questions address **pieces of information in a passage**. These are typically the easiest questions because they only require you to find information.
- **Example of a little picture/detail question:**

According to the passage, the research that led to the development of the small-comet theory began with a project originally intended to study:

- A.** the electrical activity accompanying sunspots.
- B.** water entering Earth's upper atmosphere.
- C.** static in satellite transmissions.
- D.** specks in satellite images.

- Vocabulary in context questions look for **the meaning of a word in the context of the passage**. You might even get a reference in the passage to refer, then **ask you to choose the vocabulary word that best describes it**. Sometimes you are even given a line reference.

- **Example of a vocabulary in context question:**

As it is used in line 58, the word *humor* most nearly means:

- A. personality.
- B. whim.
- C. mood.
- D. comedy.

- Development/function questions ask **how a paragraph or phrase functions in the context of a passage, how the argument in the passage is developed, or how the author structures the passage.** These assess understanding of how ideas are organized in writing in general or why an author might have organized a certain way for a specific reason.
- **Example of a development and function question:**

The main function of the second paragraph (lines 20-29) is to:

- A.** identify some of Armstrong's mentors, such as King Oliver.
- B.** list some of the early events in Armstrong's developing career.
- C.** contrast Armstrong's opinions of King Oliver and Fletcher Henderson.
- D.** describe the musical style Armstrong developed jointly with Fletcher Henderson.

Inference questions ask you to **make inferences based on a logical examination of information from the passage**. These are often seen as harder questions, but they can be answered by finding information directly from the passage.

Example of an inference question:

It can reasonably be inferred from the passage that the woman most strongly desires to attain which of the following qualities from dreaming?

- A. Relaxation
- B. Self-awareness
- C. Entertainment
- D. Self-control

- Not every question stem will explicitly say what type of question it is. Here are some good examples of different question stems and what type of question they connect to.



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