

Tips for Raising Your ACT English Score

1. Learn to practice effectively by reading and following the advice on the page 6.
2. Don't *skim* the passage. *Read* the passage, using active reading techniques.
3. Attack the questions in the best possible order to maximize your score. Before you begin each problem, consider the scope of the question before you try to answer it. Does the question require you to consider more than a single sentence? If it deals with the entire passage, then you probably want to skip this question and come back once you've answered all the quicker, easier questions!
4. When you spot an error in an underlined section of the passage, solve the error in your head BEFORE you even look at the answer choices. Remember, all but one of the answer choices are wrong, and they're designed to confuse you! Do your best best to solve the problem in your head before you look at the answers.
5. Manage your time. You've only got 45 minutes to answer 75 questions. That means that you've only got 36 seconds per question. That may not sound like much time, but it's actually more than you'll need for 75% of the questions, which is good because you need to "bank time" on those easy questions, so you'll have enough time to knock out the difficult ones.
6. Keeping your momentum is an important part of a good approach to the ACT English section. This is true for a couple of reasons. Obviously, you need to move quickly in order to finish the test, but when you get stuck on a hard problem, you're actually better off returning to that problem later with fresh eyes.
7. When you're working on a difficult problem and you're unable to come up with a good answer in your head, then it can be useful to check the answer choices for clues as to what's being tested on that problem. For example, if answer choices use plural verbs and some use singular verbs, then that's big hint that the problem deals with subject verb agreement.
8. Don't be afraid to choose NO CHANGE. If you've read a problem a few times and you can't see any way to improve the underlined text, then go ahead and choose NO CHANGE. It's often the correct answer.
9. Never leave a question blank! There's no penalty for guesses or wrong answers, so make sure you've bubbled in an answer on every problem before time expires.



Process of Elimination for ACT English

Eliminate any answer choice that:

- is grammatically incorrect
- fails to communicate an idea clearly
- includes unnecessary punctuation
- includes unnecessary words or phrases
- provides information that's irrelevant to the passage

Do not eliminate an answer choice that:

- is grammatically correct
- communicates an idea clearly
- includes NO unnecessary punctuation
- includes NO unnecessary words or phrases
- provides only information that's relevant to the passage

A Right Answer Must Pass Three Tests:

- 1. Listen to your answer.** The simplest *sounding* answer is often correct, but not if that simplicity comes at the expense of clarity. Listening to an answer is a great way to identify sentence fragments and adjective/adverb switches.
- 2. Look at your answer.** Your ears can fool you, especially on questions involving homophones (e.g. *they're*, *their*, and *there*), so be sure to use your eyes to spot grammatical mistakes that you can't hear. Remember the grammar rules in this book.
- 3. Consider your answer.** If it sounds good and looks good, then it may be the right answer, but just to be sure, take a moment to think about your answer. Check your answer to make sure it actually makes sense. Consider the commonly occurring errors in this section like subject verb agreement, unnecessary punctuation, and idiom errors.



15 Essential Grammar Concepts

1. Mark Up the Question

Always underline the words NOT, LEAST, and EXCEPT in the question.

2. Basic Punctuation

Period = Semicolon = Comma + Conjunction (FANBOYS or Subordinate)

3. Subject Verb Agreement

Use the verb to find the subject by asking "Who or what performed this action?" Then check for agreement in number. Singular verbs end in -s and must pair with singular subjects. Plural verbs do not end in -s and must pair with plural subjects.

Ex: George runs. Michael runs. The two boys run.

4. Separating Non-essential Clauses

A non-essential clause is just extra information that the rest of the sentence does not depend upon. For the purposes of separating a non-essential clause from the rest of the sentence, remember:

Colon + Non-Essential Clause
Dash + Non-Essential Clause
Comma + Non-Essential Clause + Comma
Dash + Non-Essential Clause + Dash

5. Non-essential Lists or Explanations at the end of sentences

Complete sentence + Colon + List of items
Complete sentence + Colon + Extra information

6. -ING Words (Gerunds)

-ing words are NEVER verbs. They cannot be the action word in a sentence.

-ing words (especially *having* or *being*) usually result in wordy sentences.

7. Homophones and Apostrophes

Its = Possessive form of *it*

It's = It is

Their = Possessive form of *they*

They're = *They are*

There = a location

8. Prepositions

Prepositions establish a spatial, temporal, or logical relationship between two nouns in a sentence. Memorize the "Plane Test" and how to use it. Any word that can logically be used to complete the following sentence is almost certainly a preposition.

The plane flew _____ the clouds.

9. Unnecessary Commas

Avoid answer choices with a comma before *he, she, they, or it*. Also avoid answer choices with a comma immediately before or after a preposition or the word *that*.

10. Pronoun Switches

If you start a sentence with "one" then don't switch to "you" or "a person."

11. Pronouns for People/Things/Places/Times

who = people *which* = things *where* = places *when* = times

12. Subjective & Objective Cases

Use *who* before the verb. Use *whom* after a preposition.

Ⓧ *Who won the tournament? They gave the trophy to whom?*

13. Parallelism in Lists and Word Pairs

All items in a list must match. (verb, verb, verb or noun, noun, noun)

Some word pairs require parallel construction (e.g. **not only** this **but also** that)

Ⓧ *I **ate a lasagne, danced a jig, and watched a movie.***

Ⓧ *I love **eating lasagne, dancing jigs, and watching movies.***

14. Comparisons

Ⓧ *Nate is **tall** (1). Jim is **taller** than Nate (2). I am the **tallest** in the group (3+).*

15. Could Have / Would Have / Should Have

Never use "of" in place of "have" in any of the above constructions.

Ⓧ Incorrect: *I **could of** won it all!*

Correct: *I **could have** won it all!*

USE THE ANSWER CHOICES AS CLUES!

ACT English questions would be a lot easier if each problem told you exactly which concept that problem tests. Wouldn't that be great? Well you're in luck, my friend!

Begin by reading the text to see if you can spot the error on your own. There's no need to panic if you can't. It's not a big deal. This happens to everyone. But, unlike everyone else, you've got a sweet strategy to employ when you get stumped. You can use the answer choices to figure out what the question is testing.

Direct your attention to the answer choices. You'll probably see something like this:

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. has done
- C. did
- D. does

What do you notice about the answer choices? If the verb tense is different in three of the answers, then you're almost certainly being tested on your ability to spot a tense error. Cool, huh? Let's check out another one.

- F. NO CHANGE
- G. was done
- H. were done
- J. is done

This time, you'll see plural and singular verbs. That should tell you that you're being tested on your ability to spot subject verb agreement. Makes the problem a lot easier, huh? Last one.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. however,
- C. on the contrary,
- D. therefore,

Looks like we've been given a bunch of conjunctions. Because conjunctions are used to connect ideas in a logical manner, we need to figure out how the ideas being connected are logically related. Then, our answer should be obvious. Also, notice that answers B and C can be eliminated because they're interchangeable. They can't both be right, so they must both be wrong.

The Trial by Franz Kafka

“Someone must have been telling lies about Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything really wrong, he was arrested.” Thus begins one of the great masterworks of the early 20th century. From its iconic first line to its unfinished

unfinished conclusion, *The Trial*, by Franz Kafka, is a riveted portrait of one man, Joseph K., and his struggle against the indecipherably complex and bewilderingly vague bureaucracy of the legal system. Some have characterized Kafka’s work being too vague, itself. But they don’t get the point that Kafka brilliantly drags out of the shadows. We are all Josef K., and we all share his struggle.

[1] Originally written in German, Kafka intended *The Trial* to be a darkly satirical condemnation of government’s intrusion into the private lives of individuals. [2] To that end,

Kafka places Josef K. in the middle of a dim lit maze of implied

1. Which of the following alternatives to the underlined portion would NOT be acceptable?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. This begins
- C. So begins
- D. This is the start of

2. F. NO CHANGE
G. riveted portrayal
H. riveted tale
J. riveting depiction

3. A. NO CHANGE
B. as
C. for it is
D. for being

4. Which of the following alternatives to the underlined portion would most improve the clarity and coherence of the sentence?

- F. NO CHANGE
- G. these critics don't get
- H. they fail to appreciate
- J. what they don't understand is

5. A. NO CHANGE
B. Frustrated by the clumsy encroachment of Austro-Hungarian bureaucracy,
C. Taking place in a dreamlike state,
D. A precursor for many of the better-known dystopian novels of the 20th century,

6. F. NO CHANGE
G. dimly lit
H. dimmed
J. dimly unlit

accusations, made by officials who's authority to make such

7

accusations is never clearly established. [3] But because neither

8

the charges nor the process for fighting them is ever revealed,

9

Josef K. finds himself hopelessly entangled in an unending

mess. [4] He is never able to defend himself and clear his

name; or even secure a formal trial. [5] For an entire year,

10

Joseph K. futilely attempts to prove his innocence. [6]

Ultimately, Joseph K is unceremoniously executed by agents

of the court. 11

Though it was written in 1915, Kafka's bleak story resonates

with everyone who has ever struggled against the smug

incompetence and indifferent inefficiency that always come

with bureaucracy. 12 On a much deeper level, however,

7. A. NO CHANGE
B. who are authorized
C. whose authority
D. where authorization

8. Which of the following alternatives to the underlined portion would NOT be acceptable?

- F. NO CHANGE
G. defined
H. explained
J. warranted

9. A. NO CHANGE
B. are ever
C. will be
D. could be

10. F. NO CHANGE
G. name; never securing
H. name. He never even secures
J. name, or even secure

11. For the sake of logic and coherence of this paragraph Sentence 5 should be placed:

- A. where it is now.
B. after sentence 1.
C. after sentence 3.
D. after sentence 6.

12. At this point, the writer is considering adding the following sentence:

Who doesn't hate the helpless feeling of being told you must fill out a bunch of forms and wait in a really long line?

Should the writer make this addition here?

- F. Yes, because it helps readers to imagine the frustration experienced by Josef K. in the story.
G. Yes, because it is an example of an annoyance that has persisted since Kafka's time.
H. No, because not all readers have had that experience.
J. No, because it is inconsistent with the tone and style of the essay.

The Trial cries out on behalf of the untold millions who have
13
suffered under totalitarian regimes, for the source of its potency
is not that it perfectly captures an era in history, but rather that
it offers timeless insight into the social structures that always
threaten individual liberty.

Kafka's prescience is even more chilling today than it was
during his own time. In a way, Kafka seems to have predicted
the perilous new threats of unchecked corruption, widespread
surveillance, criminal identity theft, endless wars, and even
drone strikes. What is more, his influence toward the next
14
generation of dystopian novelists cannot be denied. Without
Kafka we might never have heard from Kurt Vonnegut, Adolus
Huxley, or George Orwell. 15

13. A. NO CHANGE
B. cry's out
C. cried out
D. cries

14. F. NO CHANGE
G. upon
H. through
J. around

15. Suppose the writer's goal had been to write a brief essay that persuades readers that *The Trial* is worth reading. Would this essay successfully fulfill this goal?
- A. Yes, because the writer mentions how influential the book has been upon a number of well-known authors.
B. Yes, because the essay provides a synopsis of the plot.
C. No, because the writer never explicitly mentions to readers that they should purchase a copy of the book.
D. No because the writer highlights the depressing themes of the story.