

9 Helpful Hints for Testing!

1. Read through the full question carefully

Time is absolutely a luxury on the SAT or ACT, but there are some things you just cannot afford to rush through. One of them is skimming through the questions. Reading through the full question slowly and carefully may take up a few precious seconds, but that is time well spent. If you don't understand the question, you're likely to get the answer wrong after all! And at least some of the answer choices will be designed to confuse you on top of it.

2. Answer the Easiest Questions First

Answering the easiest questions first helps in more ways than one. For one thing, it helps you move through the test faster. If you waste time on a difficult question, you run the risk of running out of time and missing out on points for those easy questions you just didn't get to.

Moving through the test quickly while answering those easy questions will also help boost your confidence and calm your fears. Test takers tend to perform much better when they feel more confident and less anxious.

Answering the easier questions first can also jog your memory, making it easier to go back and answer the more difficult ones you skipped earlier. This can be particularly helpful when answering questions on related topics.

3. Answer the Question BEFORE Reading the Answers Provided

Can you guess the answer to the question without looking at the answers provided? If you can, it's a pretty good bet that you are right. If one of the choices is the answer you guessed or is similar to what you guessed, you know you're right. If you don't see your answer there, you know you need to go back and re-read the question to see if you missed any valuable information.

4. Eliminate the Obviously Wrong Choices

SAT and ACT questions tend to throw in 1 or 2 obviously wrong answers into the mix to add to the confusion. If you're having to guess an answer, you can cross out those incorrect responses to narrow down your options. This increases your odds of getting the answer right, even if you're relying purely on guesswork. After all, there is no penalty for guessing!

5. Consider ALL The Answer Choices Before Marking Your Final Answer

We said it earlier: the questions and answers provided are designed to trick you. Even if you know the answer to the question, don't rush to mark it on the test paper. First, take a look at the answer choices. Is one of the choices 'All of the above'? If it is, you must first make sure that there isn't more than one correct answer to the question.

Go through the answer choices again. Can you identify at least 2 correct answers to the question? If you do, 'All of the above' is most likely the correct option.

6. Carefully Read Those Passage Introductions

Most passages will have a little introductory passage in italics. It can be tempting to ignore the passage introduction in an attempt to save some time. This is a mistake and one that could cost you even more time in the end. These introductory passages are meant to give you a better understanding of the context of the passage that follows. Without reading the introduction, you may find it difficult to answer the question asked. On the other hand, you may arrive at a wrong understanding and answer the question incorrectly.

Don't skim it either. Read it properly just as you would the actual passage!

7. Highlight Key Points in Long Questions & Passages

Does a question or passage appear too long with multiple ideas or subsections integrated into it? Overly long questions and passages can be challenging to understand and difficult to answer. One way to simplify it is to mark key points as you come across them. With the key points highlighted, you won't have to waste time reading the whole question again to locate the answers.

8. Pace Yourself

The ACT and SAT are timed tests, but that doesn't mean you should rush through to try to answer the questions as quickly as possible. You're bound to make some missteps if you take this approach! The more you rush, the more likely you are to make careless mistakes, misunderstand questions, or entirely miss questions.

Rushing and constant glancing at the clock can also leave you stressed. As long as you took practice tests that were timed, you should be able to pace yourself when it comes to the real deal!

9. Have Time Left Over? Review Your Answers

Use any extra time you have to review your test, and don't simply review your answer selections. You should read over any confusing questions, check that you answered the correct answer in the correct spot, and look for careless mistakes or anything you overlooked. Sometimes those little mistakes can cause you to lose out on points that could bump your score up quite a bit! Nerves and rushing can also increase your chances of making these errors.

However, make sure you are *not* turning back to previous sections or ahead to the next section. You can *only* work on a specific section at a time. So if you're on the science portion of the ACT, you can't work on the math part! Doing so can get you disqualified from the exam. If you've reviewed your answers several times and still have time left over, sit quietly and wait for the next step.