

Resource Manual

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# Expert Tips for ACT Reading



**WINWARD**  
ACADEMY



**Before reviewing specific tips for the ACT Reading section, let's ensure you know the rules that apply to the entire test.**

Never leave an answer choice blank. There is no penalty for a wrong answer, so you should always provide an answer, even if it's a guess.

When practicing, never leave a mistake behind. You'll repeat errors if you don't identify and learn from them, so you must understand the answer to every question you ever practice. The best way to make sure you actually know a concept is to teach it to someone else.

Never do a timed practice without a scantron. Yes, you have to practice bubbling. Many students make mistakes by filling in a different bubble than they intended or by skipping a line. Don't be one of them.

#### **Format of the ACT Reading Section**

The 40 questions are divided among 4 passages with 10 questions each. The passages always go in this order: prose fiction, social science, humanities, natural science.



## 10 Tips for the ACT Reading



Questions: 40 Total



Time: 35 Minutes

(8 minutes 45 seconds per passage)

**Now for the specific tips:**

### **1. Light your fire**

This portion of the exam occurs after the 10 minute break – so you need to be ready to be super focused right when you start. As we like to say, this is the time to light your fire! When you sit down for the Reading section, you should feel sharp and focused. Believe that you're going to find those answers quickly. Pacing is key. Be mentally prepared to sit down and do it.

### **2. Know your strategy**

Many students struggle to finish the Reading section. They can only complete three out of the four passages no matter how much they practice. If you're one of these students, it makes more sense to spend 11.5 minutes on each of three passages and get every question right, and then guess on the last 10 questions. You can get a score in the mid to high 20s with this strategy! If you want a 30 or higher, you'll have to get through all four passages. Knowing your goal score can help determine the right strategy.

### **3. Eliminate extremes**

If you ever see a question with answers that say "always, never, the best, or the worst," those answers aren't correct. The passages won't describe offensive or extreme situations or beliefs, so those types of extreme answers won't be correct.

#### 4. Answer the question asked

ACT Reading questions can be sneaky. Sometimes, the answer choices will be accurate; they will be real things from the passage, but they won't answer the question being asked. You must understand: just because something is accurate from the passage doesn't mean it's the right answer to that question.

#### 5. Understand your task

The goal isn't for you to call us after the ACT and tell us every detail about the beautiful reading passages. Instead, we want to hear how you found every answer. Your job is not to read and then remember for hours or for days; your job is to read so that you're finding answers to questions. For example, if you had an open book science test, you wouldn't go to your desk and first read the chapter from start to finish. Instead, you would identify what a question is asking and then go find the answer. Same thing here: your job is to play hide-and-go-seek. All the information is there; you just have to find it.

#### 6. Find the answer

Your job is to find the answers. Don't rely on your memory. Look back in the passage and find the answer that you're looking for. And remember from tip #4, make sure you're answering the question that's being asked.

#### 7. Read actively

If you find yourself reading and nothing is sinking in, then you must refocus yourself. Take a moment; adjust your posture; close your eyes; take a deep breath. Return to the passage when you can read actively and stay sharp. When you get to a question and it asks about a bug's mating call, you must be able to go, "Oh yeah, that mating call sentence was right here," and then find that precise line in the passage. You'll constantly be going back and forth between the passage and the questions.

#### 8. Know your order

Remember that on the ACT, there are four different types of passages, but that doesn't mean you have to complete them in order. In fact, many students improve their scores simply by reordering their approach to the passages. Some even prefer to complete the ACT Reading section backwards, doing passage 4, then 3, then 2, then 1. Become familiar through practice exams which passages are your stronger ones and which are your weaker ones. Save your weakest one for last.

#### 9. Underline key information

We say key information because sometimes students will underline every word in the passage. That won't help. Only underline information like names or numbers or underline when the tone or the events shift. If something unexpected or surprising happens, underline that.

#### 10. Never insert your own ideas

This isn't your class at school and your teacher isn't asking you to come up with your own ideas. Your job is to find what the question is asking for.

The biggest challenge in the ACT Reading section is finishing within the time limit. The questions don't get more difficult, so accuracy on the fourth passage (questions 31-40) is attributable to pacing and fatigue, not the level of difficulty of the questions.

The ACT is testing your ability to read quickly and prioritize information. Studying with Winward Academy can help you incorporate strategies tailored to your individual strengths.