

The Best ACT Advice You Can Get

5 Strategies that Will Get
You 4+ Points

Expert Tips from the
PrepScholar Team

PrepScholar 

How to Use This ACT Guide

If you're like thousands of other students, you're probably confused about ACT prep. You may be unsure about what exactly to study. You might lack the motivation or focus to spend enough time on the ACT. You might have problems finding time to fit ACT prep into your busy schedule.

When you tackle the ACT the right way, it's actually one of the simplest parts of college admissions. But with the wrong approach, it can be a huge headache.

At PrepScholar, we teach students and families how to conquer the test. We know exactly what works and, more importantly, what doesn't work.

That's why we wrote this guide: to teach you **how to overcome the biggest ACT prep problems.** These strategies have worked time and time again, for thousands of students. This guide will lift the cloud of doubt in your mind about ACT prep, giving you action-oriented tips you can start using right now to boost your ACT score.

By reading this guide, you'll have a huge advantage over students who don't.

Follow the advice in this guide, and you'll know the fundamentals of **getting the ACT score you need to get into your dream college.**

Why Trust PrepScholar?

This program is the brainchild of thousands of hours of ACT training. Every strategy, tactic, and philosophy has been integrated into PrepScholar to make it the most effective way to improve your ACT score.

Our Students Get Results

- An **average 4 point ACT score increase** (4 to 5 points on each section)
- Up to **6.1x higher admissions rates** to Top 10 colleges compared to the national average
- 99% accepted to one of their top choice schools

PrepScholar is an online ACT prep program covering everything you need to know about the ACT. We create **a complete study plan customized to each student**, so you'll always be working on what you need to improve on. You'll be assigned specific step-by-step instructions on what lessons to take and what practice problems to work on.

It's available to anyone with an Internet connection and completely self-directed, which means you can fit it into your schedule at any time.

Finally, it has an awesome **4+ point money-back guarantee**.

[Learn More About How PrepScholar Can Help](#)

#1: You Get What You Put In

No matter who you are, where you come from, or what your skill level is, there is one key rule to ACT prep: **you need to be motivated.**

There is no way around this fact. To see real results, you need to put in the necessary time and effort to study, which means you need to be motivated enough to do so. You have to want to improve. (Parents, this means your student, not just you!)

Now, a lot of parents try to create motivation by forcing their students to study and punishing them if they don't. This causes a lot of stress and friction for everyone — and it doesn't even work.

Instead, **students need internal motivation, to want that higher ACT score for themselves.** We've seen time and again that internally motivated students spend more time studying and get better results than those who are simply afraid of being punished.

How do you create internal motivation? Understand why the ACT matters!

Here's the big picture: the ACT is still a major factor for getting into your dream college. Your ACT score makes up anywhere from 30 to 50% of most colleges admissions decisions. Even test-optional schools care more about the ACT than they claim (which is why more schools are revoking those policies). If you don't meet a school's cutoff score, you're not getting in.

Even when students know the ACT is important, many don't realize that **studying for the ACT is, hour for hour, the most impactful way to raise your chances of acceptance.**

Instead, these students spend hundreds of hours on activities like volunteering, sports, or music. All of these are wonderful extracurriculars, but when you've already put in 200 hours into your activity, an extra 40 hours isn't going to do anything to raise your chances of getting into college.

On the other hand, **40 hours spent on the ACT, studying in the right way, will likely boost your score by hundreds of points.** This will often double, triple, even quadruple your odds of being admitted to your dream school.

To find your own big picture motivation, picture your dream school — the school you truly want to go to, not where your parents or friends suggest. Imagine getting the admissions packet in the mail, setting the stage for the rest of your life. That's what studying for the ACT is going to get you.



Now that we've got the big picture in place, we need to work on the little picture. Studying for the ACT can be boring! Even once you sit down to study, it's easy to lose motivation and crack out your phone, message your friends, or browse social media instead. You need tools to counter that temptation.

Based on dozens of psychological research studies and the hundreds of students we've worked with we've developed one simple strategy:

Break up ACT prep into small, clear-cut goals, and create incentives for meeting those goals.

Humans are most motivated when they accomplish small tasks and receive rewards or self-satisfaction when they accomplish these tasks.

You need to **break up the giant ACT test into small, manageable parts** and see that putting in time really does raise your score. This will inspire you and help you build a habit of studying for the ACT.

We designed PrepScholar around this successful strategy. PrepScholar breaks up ACT prep into small learning goals, through skill-based lessons and quizzes, and constantly gives you feedback on how you're improving.

We've also found that students often need help scheduling their study sessions and reminding them to actually study. **PrepScholar will check in weekly and prompt you to schedule study sessions**, as well as sending you reminders. We then track your study time to send weekly reports to you and your parent so you know you're on track.

PrepScholar students frequently say that it's the best prep system they've ever used. They no longer have to worry about what to do or when to do it, and can focus on what's really important: learning to ace the ACT. Some have even said **studying with PrepScholar is addictive**. Imagine that.

We've just covered a huge issue: motivation. Now we actually have to learn how to prepare for the ACT. Read on.

#2: Don't Trust Imitations

You can spend all the time in the world prepping for the ACT, but if you don't do it in the right way, you're not going to make any progress. You can even lower your score!

The **ACT is a unique test, unlike any that you've taken in school**; it's purposely designed to trick the average student.

Questions are worded in strange ways. Trick answers bait unsuspecting students into picking them carelessly.

This idea may sound outlandish — why would anyone design a test this way? Simply put, it's because the ACT functions as a college entrance exam.

Colleges use the ACT to compare students to one another.

If your ACT score is higher than another applicant's, you'll have a better shot at getting in. If your ACT score isn't high enough for the school's standards, you're not getting in. Period.

The ACT gives schools a way to tell who's at the top, who's average, and who's below average. Imagine if, instead of the ACT, college applications used a standardized exam testing whether you could tie your shoes. 99% of people would pass with flying colors, making the results useless for admissions decisions.

The ACT gives colleges what they want by making the test tricky for most students.

- In the English section, the ACT uses **grammatically correct English that you would never hear in normal conversation**. Students get tricked into picking the wrong answer simply because it “sounds weird.”
- In the math section, the ACT tests **concepts that most students know, but in very convoluted ways**. For example, one ACT question asks you to find the area of a triangular region within a rectangle. Most geometry classes will never teach you how to do this specifically.
- In the reading section, the ACT asks students to interpret passages. In school, any interpretation can be correct – it just depends on how you argue it. This is absolutely wrong for the ACT. **There is only ever ONE correct answer for every single question on the ACT.**
- In the science section, questions are totally different from the ones you see in science class. They ask you to interpret passages and data describing specific experiments. You need to know how to find the answers rather than recall specific facts.

So the ACT is designed to trick you and most students fall for the traps. How do we avoid this problem?

Practice only with the most realistic ACT questions you can get.

The ACT has a consistent style, with questions and answers that are written in a specific way. **By practicing with realistic ACT questions, you'll learn this style and understand all the ways the ACT tries to trick you.**

Unfortunately, most ACT practice questions out there are really bad for learning how to do the ACT. Many prep books are written by people who don't have that much experience with the ACT and haven't learned how to score well on the ACT themselves. Textbook publishers rely on their brand name to sell copies without creating questions that actually mimic the ACT.

Imagine that you wanted to join a baseball team. Instead of practicing with baseballs, you decided to train using wiffle balls, and you got really, really good at hitting wiffle balls. You understood how they moved and how to hit them in just the right way. Come tryout day, the pitcher throws a baseball at you, and it's a total surprise. Swing and a miss, over and over again.

ACT prep works the same way! Practicing on bad questions will train you for the totally wrong thing.



This is why PrepScholar focuses on **truly realistic practice questions**. First, we incorporate nine real practice tests published by the ACT. These are actual tests from previous administrations of the ACT, containing almost 2,000 questions. We integrate these tests into your study schedule and tell you exactly when to take them for the greatest impact.

To create even more practice questions, we've hired the best ACT experts in the country to craft over 1,200 of the most realistic ACT questions available. These experts have scored in the top 1% of all students on the ACT (many earning perfect scores), have graduated from top schools like Harvard and MIT, and have earned multiple teaching awards. They know the ACT in and out, and **the questions they write are better than anything else out there** (aside from the official ACT practice tests).

With PrepScholar, you'll be training on baseballs, not wiffle balls.

Now that we know what kinds of questions you need to use, we need to cover how you'll actually be using them. Keep reading to learn more.

#3: Drill Specific Skills

It's true that PrepScholar has thousands of realistic practice questions, but great practice alone is not enough to raise your score. You have to study the right questions, at the right time, in the right order, to get the greatest point improvement possible.

To do well on the ACT, you need to learn dozens of separate skills.

There are four major sections – English, math, reading and science – but each section is made up of multiple sub-skills:

- Within math, you need to know number operations, algebra, geometry, probability, and more. Even within algebra, you need to know how to solve equations, deal with word problems, and understand the properties of functions.
- Within English, you need to master over a dozen grammar rules, many of which you don't learn formally in school.
- Within science, you need to know how to compare different hypotheses, navigate tables and graphs to find data, and more.
- Within reading, you need to know the six major passage question types, each of which need to be treated completely differently.



If you ignore these distinctions, you'll waste a lot of time. Doing whole ACT sections over and over again won't actually make much impact on your score because you're not focusing on training your key weaknesses.

By mastering each specific skill, you will master the ACT as a whole.

Here at PrepScholar, we divide the ACT up into thirty unique skills. When you start the program, our diagnostic determines your strengths and weaknesses and creates a study program specifically customized for you.

To improve each skill, you'll have dedicated lessons and at least sixty (and up to two hundred) practice questions. You'll master how to recognize and answer each type of question so there will be no surprises on test day.

There's no other prep system out there that organizes your prep so thoroughly, even though it's key to improving your score. Doing one triangle question, then one fraction question, then one algebra question is like switching between swimming strokes in the pool. You won't make good progress.

We've heard from tons of our students that learning these strategies and using PrepScholar have completely changed their perspective on how to prepare for the ACT. **Many of the strategies seem so obvious after you hear them that it's shocking everyone doesn't know these facts.**

#4: Master Your Mistakes

So far we've learned that effective ACT prep is built on three things: being motivated to study, studying with realistic questions, and studying in a focused way.

And yet, those three strategies still aren't enough. **Many students focus on quantity over quality.** They blaze through hundreds of practice questions and get a false sense of confidence. After all, they've seen hundreds of questions – how can they NOT have mastered the ACT?

They're ignoring one critical rule:

For every single question you get wrong, **you MUST understand WHY you got it wrong**, and you MUST know how to avoid this mistake in the future. Simply doing questions isn't enough. When you miss a question, you miss it for a reason. You either didn't know the material, or you made a mistake in your work, or you made a careless mistake. **If you don't figure this out, you're going to make the same mistake**, over and over and over again.

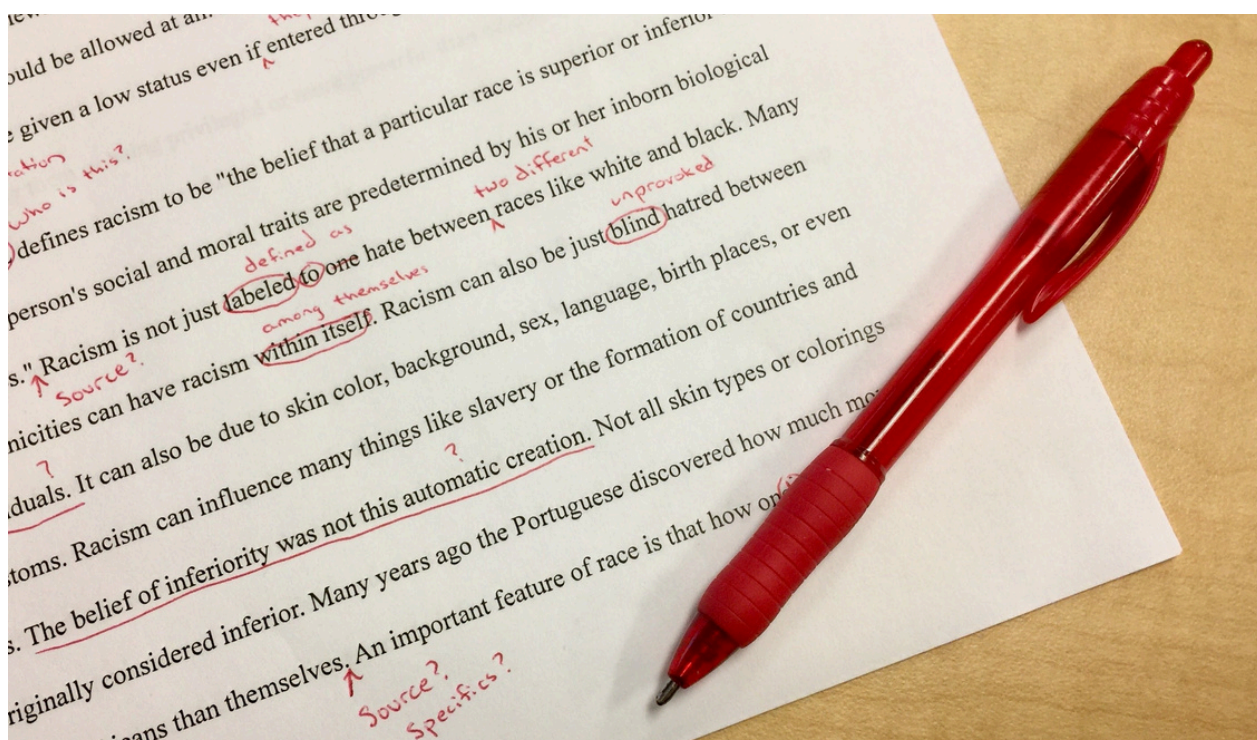
Let's use another sports analogy. You're trying to learn to throw a football like a quarterback, so you throw it 100 times based on what you've seen on TV. You get a little better – the ball goes farther – but it's still not quite right and you don't know what to actually change.

Now imagine if you had star football player Tom Brady standing by your side. You throw the ball once, and, using his years of experience, he tells you exactly what you need to improve. After putting his tips into practice, you throw the next football better than you did after 100 tries on your own.

Preparing for the ACT works exactly the same way! You have the choice of blazing through 100 practice questions and feeling smug without improving, or you can carefully work through 20 questions focusing on why you're missing each and master your mistakes.

When you use PrepScholar, you'll not only complete high-quality questions that are focused on specific skills. **You'll also review every single question that you missed and learn what mistakes you made.**

Even better, **PrepScholar keeps track of every question that you've ever missed so that you can review your mistakes at any time.** That's the advantage of building our own custom technology – we create what's most useful for you because we've mastered the ACT prep process ourselves.



#5: Customize Your Prep

We've covered a lot of ground in this guide, including how the ACT really works, why it works that way and how you can best avoid its tricks and traps for a top score.

But we still have one more step — the final strategy that will tie everything together. **You are a unique person with different strengths, weaknesses, and goals from any other student.** As such, you need to prepare in a way that's customized to you.

Just think about yourself compared to other students at your school. You might have gotten better grades in math than in English, or vice versa.

Every student has different skills. Therefore, every student needs a different study plan for the ACT.

Here's the problem: **besides PrepScholar, nearly every other prep method out there treats every student exactly the same.**

Books give the same strategies and lessons to every reader, and students read the book cover to cover in the same way. Expensive classes from big-name companies put 20 students into the same classroom and drag everyone through the same lectures.

With PrepScholar, you'll get a study plan that is made specifically for you. **We completely customize the program for your abilities, so that you're always working on what's most effective for you.** We also teach you different strategies depending on what your score target is.

Now What?

All of this info is a lot to take in. **Hopefully you've significantly changed how you think about the ACT**, from understanding the importance of motivation to doing the right types of questions, in the right way.

We've seen these five strategies work for thousands of students over the past decade, even as the format of the ACT has changed. If you dig deep and apply these strategies, you can absolutely raise your ACT score to where you want it to be.

Should you need a bit more guidance on your ACT prep journey, we hope you'll give PrepScholar a try! **We truly believe it's the best ACT prep program out there**, and you can [start a five-day free trial today](#).

If you have more questions, please call us at +1 (866) 811-5546, where one of our Academic Advisers will walk you through the best options for you and your family. We'd love to hear from you!

Finally, if you found this guide helpful, **please share it with any other people who might benefit.**

– The PrepScholar Team