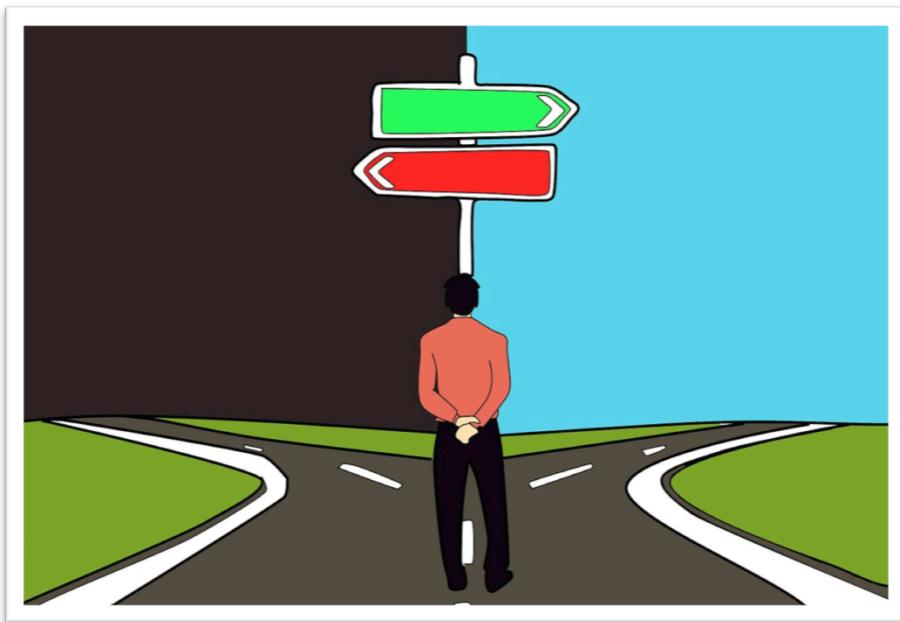




# ACT Practice Tests

## What They Can and Can't Do

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# INTRO

## ACT Practice Tests



ACT practice tests are invaluable for any level of ACT preparation, from those just beginning their study to those who have studied for months already.

There are **limits**, however, to what ACT practice tests can do.

Read on to find out what things ACT practice tests are good for and what they just can't accomplish!

# 1: What Practice Tests Do Well

- > **Key Point:** Taking realistic practice tests reveals your strengths and weaknesses and helps build test muscle memory.



Going through ACT practice tests can help your studying in myriad ways. For one thing, taking practice ACTs **orients you towards the test**. If you get too caught up in doing practice problem sets, you can forget what your ultimate goal is: doing well on the ACT when you sit down and take it on test day, not just acing problems in isolation.

Making it through the full test length ([three to four](#) hours, depending on whether or not you take the ACT with [Writing](#)) requires **stamina** as well as knowledge, and part

of being prepared is making sure that you're strong in both those arenas.



### **The Importance of Taking Realistic Practice Tests**

By taking practice tests in the morning and all at once (just like the real ACT), you'll be able to review mistakes that wouldn't show up if you were just doing practice sets in the afternoon or evening. This is why, at the very beginning of your studying, you should sit down and take a [realistic ACT practice test](#) all the way through. It's also imperative that you have high accuracy questions that are representative of what you'll see on test day, and there's no better source of these high-quality questions than official ACT practice tests.

Practice tests are valuable not just because of what you gain while you're taking them, but because of what you can gain upon **reflection after taking the test**. After you've taken your first practice test, note what surprised you most about the experience (both in a good way and in a bad way). It could turn out that you're a lot more focused when you sit down to take the test all at once; on the other hand, you might discover that when you take the ACT at 8am, you're a lot more prone to making **careless mistakes** on Reading than you would be otherwise.

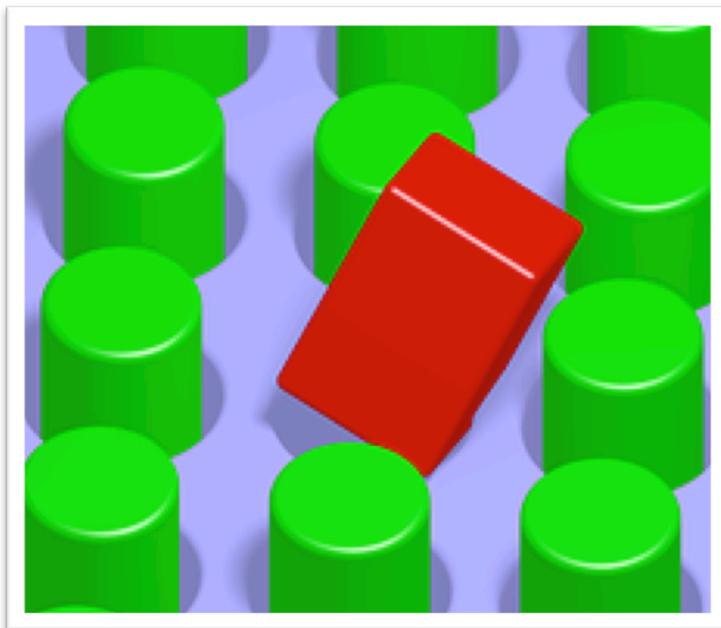
[Reviewing wrong answers](#), or even questions you weren't sure about but guessed correctly on, is key to improvement. **Once you identify your problems, you can then come up with solutions** (whether it's making sure to sleep enough the night before the test or continuing to take more practice tests to get used to the time demands). After you've implemented those solutions, you should take a second practice test and see if the changes you've made in your studying have resulted in changes in your score.

One final point is that taking practice tests close (but not too close) [to the ACT](#) helps you build up your **test muscle memory**. Like playing a piano concerto all the way through in advance of a concert, or playing through a full-time scrimmage before a big game, taking full-length ACT practice tests gets your mind in shape.

**> Conclusion:** High-quality practice tests are a critical (30%+) part of a good ACT study program. Read more about why high-quality materials are important in [our guide](#) to the best ACT prep websites.

## 2: What Practice Tests Don't Do

- > **Key Point:** Practice tests become useless if you don't reflect on your performance and learn from your mistakes.



While practice tests are important for all the reasons outlined above, you can't spend 80%+ of your ACT prep time on practice tests and call it a day. Practice tests aren't the answer to every problem and won't cure all your issues.

Let's say, that you're 30 hours into your studying. If you take three practice tests in a row, you're not likely to see positive results. You'll be gaining a little bit of **muscle memory**, but score increases as a result of muscle memory are very low. You'd be better off investing that time shoring up your weak spots with targeted practice questions.



### When Practice Tests Fall Short

Doing focused **practice questions** outside of taking full-length practice tests is important for **improving specific skills**, like using quadratic equations or understanding parallelisms. Answering the same type of question over and over again and drilling down on why you're making mistakes is the most effective path to improving your performance in those areas.

As you improve on the ACT overall, narrow practice is more efficient, because **the more you study, the fewer areas and types of questions you'll struggle with.**

Therefore, as you get further along in your studying, it's a better use of your time to focus in on your weak areas

rather than taking an entire practice test and wasting time on doing questions that you already can ace.

Finally, practice tests become useless or wasted without enough preparation before taking each one. If you take one, don't learn any lessons (either by **reflecting on wrong answers** or **reviewing theory and content you didn't know**), and take another practice test, the second one will almost certainly be a waste of time and energy.

> **Conclusion:** Practice tests are most effective as a study tool when used in conjunction with other strategies like targeted practice questions and reviewing your errors.

# AND NOW WHAT?

Through this guide, you've learned a lot about what ACT practice tests can and cannot do for you. Make sure you structure your studying in a way that works for your needs so that you can see the best results.

We at PrepScholar believe we've built the best ACT prep program in the world. But even if you don't work with us at PrepScholar, we hope you found this guide useful.

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or **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.

Good luck!

-The PrepScholar Team