



**ACT**<sup>®</sup>

Before, During,  
and After

**3 STAGES OF TAKING  
A COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAM**

# Introduction

## What is a college entrance exam, and why should you take one?

One aspect of applying for college is submitting a college entrance exam score. All US four-year universities and colleges accept your exam score.

But, what does it measure? Why do colleges consider it in their admissions process?

A college entrance exam, like the ACT® test, **MEASURES YOUR ACHIEVEMENT** in academic areas important for your college and career success.

That's why ACT refers to it as a **college readiness assessment**.

Colleges use a readiness assessment to gauge how well you've mastered certain subject areas during your high school career and how well you might do in those subjects during your first year of college.

### THESE SUBJECTS INCLUDE:

English

Math

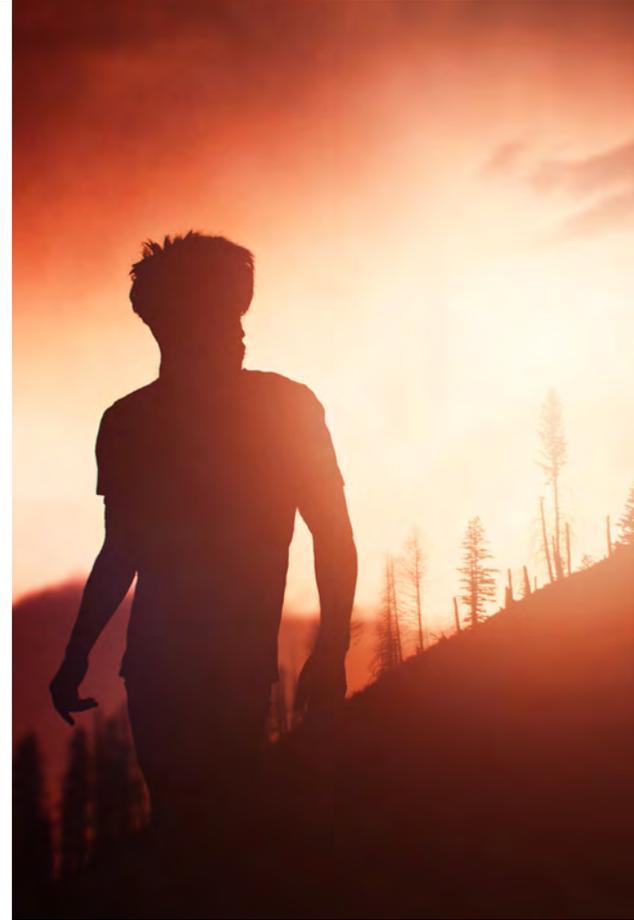
Reading

Science

Writing (optional)

In addition to giving you an indication of your college readiness, your ACT score can help match your interests with different majors and allow more educational and financial opportunities.

**THIS BOOK WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO PREPARE AND WHAT TO DO BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE ACT TEST.**



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# Chapter 1

## BEFORE THE TEST



# Before the Test

“What courses should I take in high school?”

## Taking the right courses and doing well in them is like studying for the test.

There are recommended combinations of courses, in each specific subject area, you should consider taking while in high school to best help you prepare for a college readiness assessment. The more challenging the class, the more prepared you'll be for the test and for college courses.

### RECOMMENDED COLLEGE PREP COURSES

#### English

Four years of English

#### Mathematics

Three years of mathematics, including rigorous courses in Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II

#### Natural Sciences

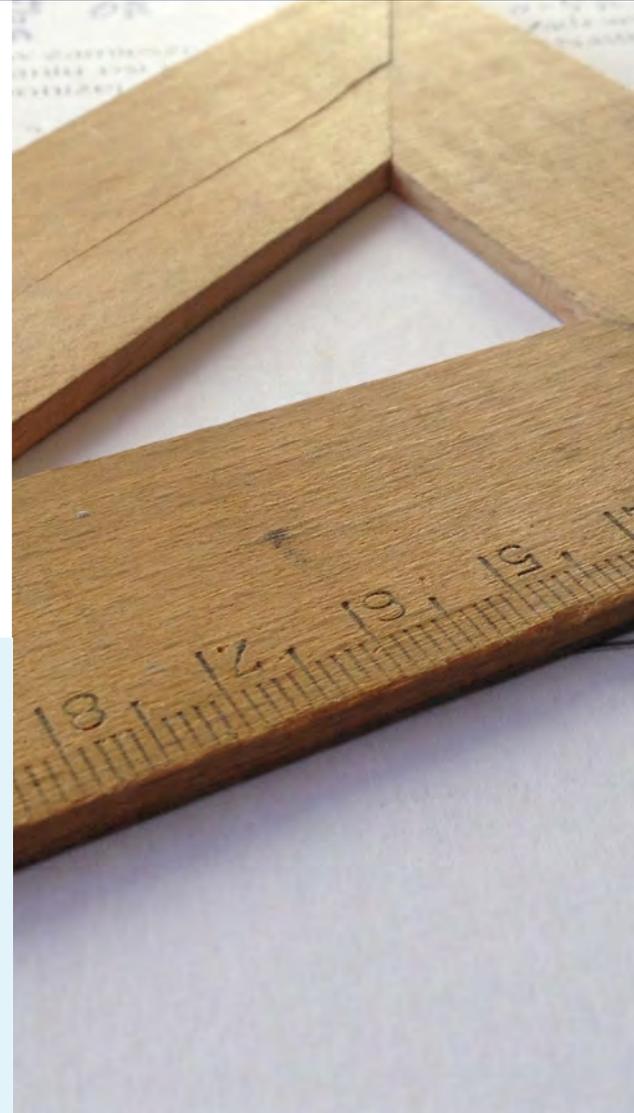
Three years of science, including rigorous courses in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics

#### Social Studies

Three years of social studies

#### Additional Courses

Some colleges and universities require other classes as prerequisites for admission, such as two or more years of the same foreign language or courses in the visual arts, music, theater, drama, dance, computer science, etc.



This is how the ACT has always worked. It will test your proficiency in the core academic areas of English, reading, math, and science.

Based on extensive research, ACT has formed College Readiness Benchmarks that state if you score at or above an **18 for English, 22 for reading, 22 for mathematics, and 23 for science**, you are ready for college.

If you reach an ACT College Readiness Benchmark, then you have a high probability of getting a good grade in that corresponding course during your first year of college.

# Before the Test

“What should I do months before the test?”

## There are four things you should consider doing when it comes to studying for a college readiness assessment.

**TAKE A PRACTICE TEST**—Taking a practice ACT test allows you to familiarize yourself with the format and types of questions asked. After you take a practice test, note your strengths but, more importantly, identify areas for improvement.

- Download this free study guide that contains a [full practice test](#) and introduces you to the format of the test.

**PLAN YOUR PRACTICE AND STUDY TIME**—Set aside small amounts of time for studying over an extended period. Keep a calendar of your schedule, but make sure to keep it flexible for surprise homework assignments, extracurricular activities, and fun.

- For more tips and resources, visit our [college and career planning page](#).

**KEEP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE**—Practice positive thinking: imagine yourself sitting in the quiet test room, bubbling your answers on the scantron, and meeting the challenge of the exam.

**TAKE A LOOK AT ACT TEST PREP OPTIONS**—They can help you become more familiar with the test format, gain confidence, and be ready on test day.

- [Compare all the options](#) and find the ACT test prep that fits your learning style and preference.



# Before the Test

“What can I do the night before and the morning of the test?”

## BEFORE THE TEST

### 1. GET A GOOD NIGHT’S REST

Research shows that you can improve your score if you get between 7 and 9 hours of sleep the night before the test.

### 2. EAT A GREAT BREAKFAST

And make sure that breakfast is full of brain-boosting food. Protein and fiber-rich food can help optimize your brain power. For example: eggs, fruit, granola bars, yogurt, nuts, whole-wheat bread, etc.

### 3. REMAIN CALM AND CONFIDENT

Remember, you’ve prepared for this. Be confident in what you know.



# Before the Test

“What should I bring to the test?”

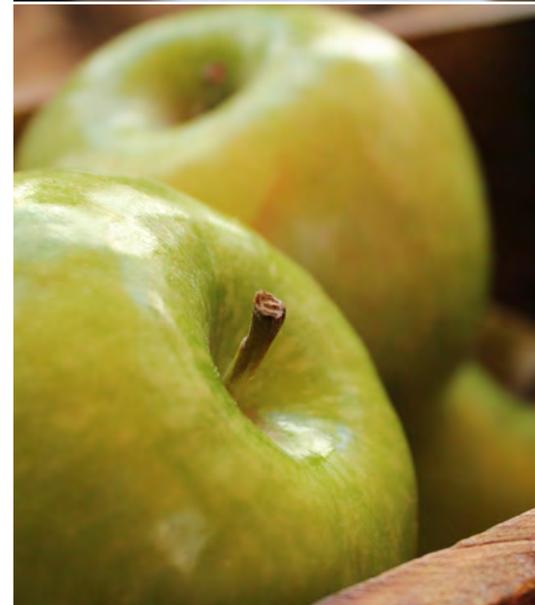
**READ AND TAKE NOTE. YOU DON'T WANT TO FORGET ANYTHING OR RISK NOT BEING ADMITTED TO THE TEST.**

## BEFORE THE TEST

- ✓ A PRINTED COPY OF YOUR TICKET
- ✓ ACCEPTABLE PHOTO IDENTIFICATION
- ✓ A PERMITTED CALCULATOR
- ✓ A WATCH TO PACE YOURSELF
- ✓ SHARPENED, SOFT LEAD NO. 2 PENCILS WITH GOOD ERASERS
- ✓ SNACKS OR DRINKS TO CONSUME OUTSIDE OF THE TEST ROOM

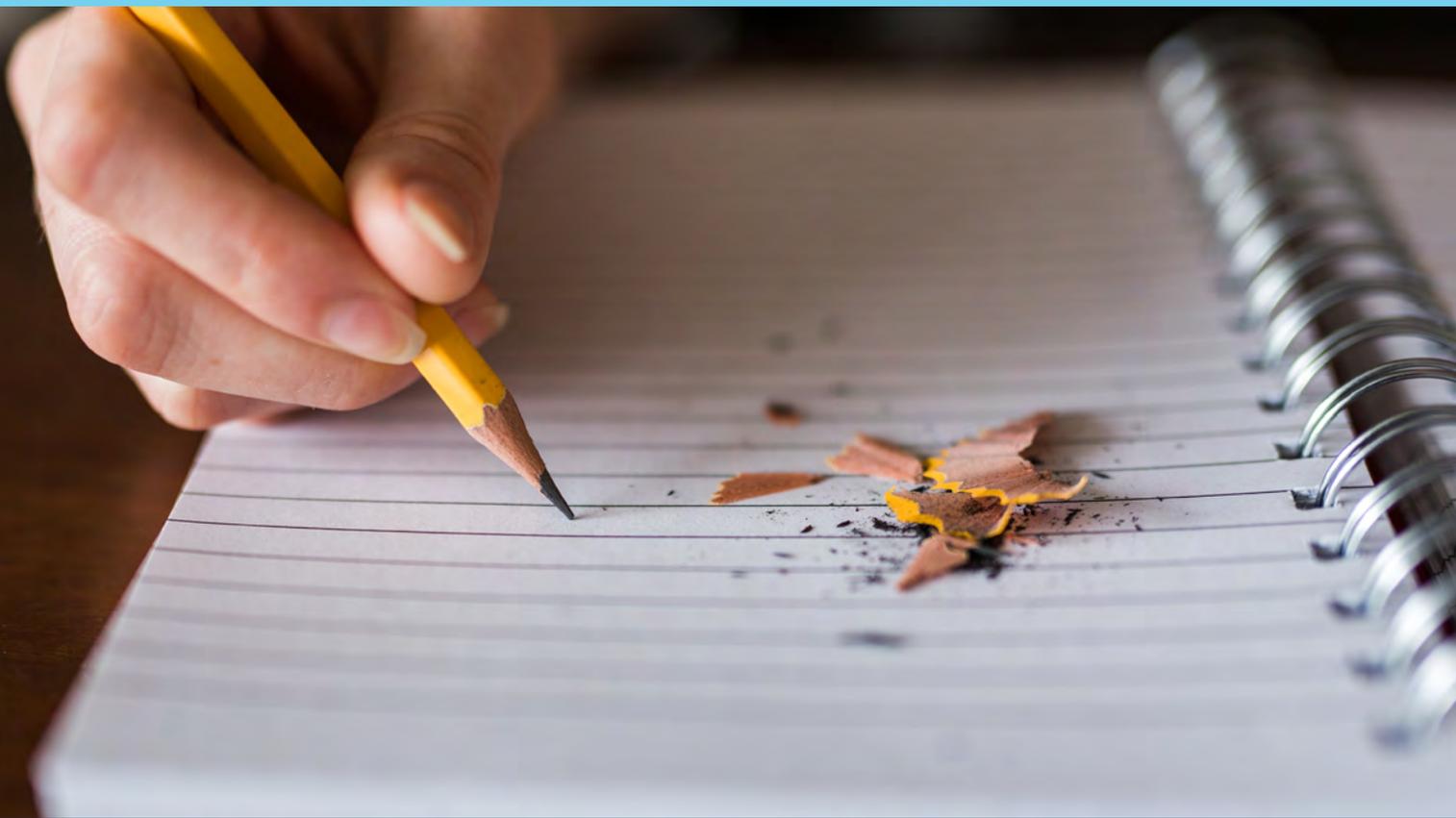
More information about what to bring can be found at [actstudent.org](https://actstudent.org)

You may want to gather these materials the night before to help guard against unneeded stress the day of the test.



# Chapter 2

## DURING THE TEST



# During the Test

“What types of calculators can I bring?”

## THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF CALCULATORS ARE PERMITTED, BUT ONLY AFTER THEY ARE MODIFIED AS NOTED:

- ✓ **YOU CAN USE CALCULATORS THAT CAN HOLD PROGRAMS OR DOCUMENTS—**  
*Remove all documents and programs that have computer algebra system functionality*
- ✓ **CALCULATORS WITH PAPER TAPE—**  
*Remove the tape*
- ✓ **CALCULATORS THAT MAKE NOISE—**  
*Turn off the sound*
- ✓ **CALCULATORS WITH AN INFRARED DATA PORT—**  
*Completely cover the infrared data port*
- ✓ **CALCULATORS THAT HAVE POWER CORDS—**  
*Remove all power/electrical cords*

Remember, for the ACT test, you are not required to use a calculator. All problems can be solved without a calculator.



# During the Test

“What are some test-taking tips?”

## It's test time! What to do once you're in the fray of shuffling paper, scratching pencils, and a ticking clock?

Here are some general test tips:



### 1. PACE YOURSELF

Don't spend too much time on a single question.



### 2. TO THE POINT

Use a sharpened No. 2 pencil with a good eraser.



### 3. ANSWER EVERY QUESTION

You are not penalized for wrong answers.



### 4. NARROW YOUR CHOICES

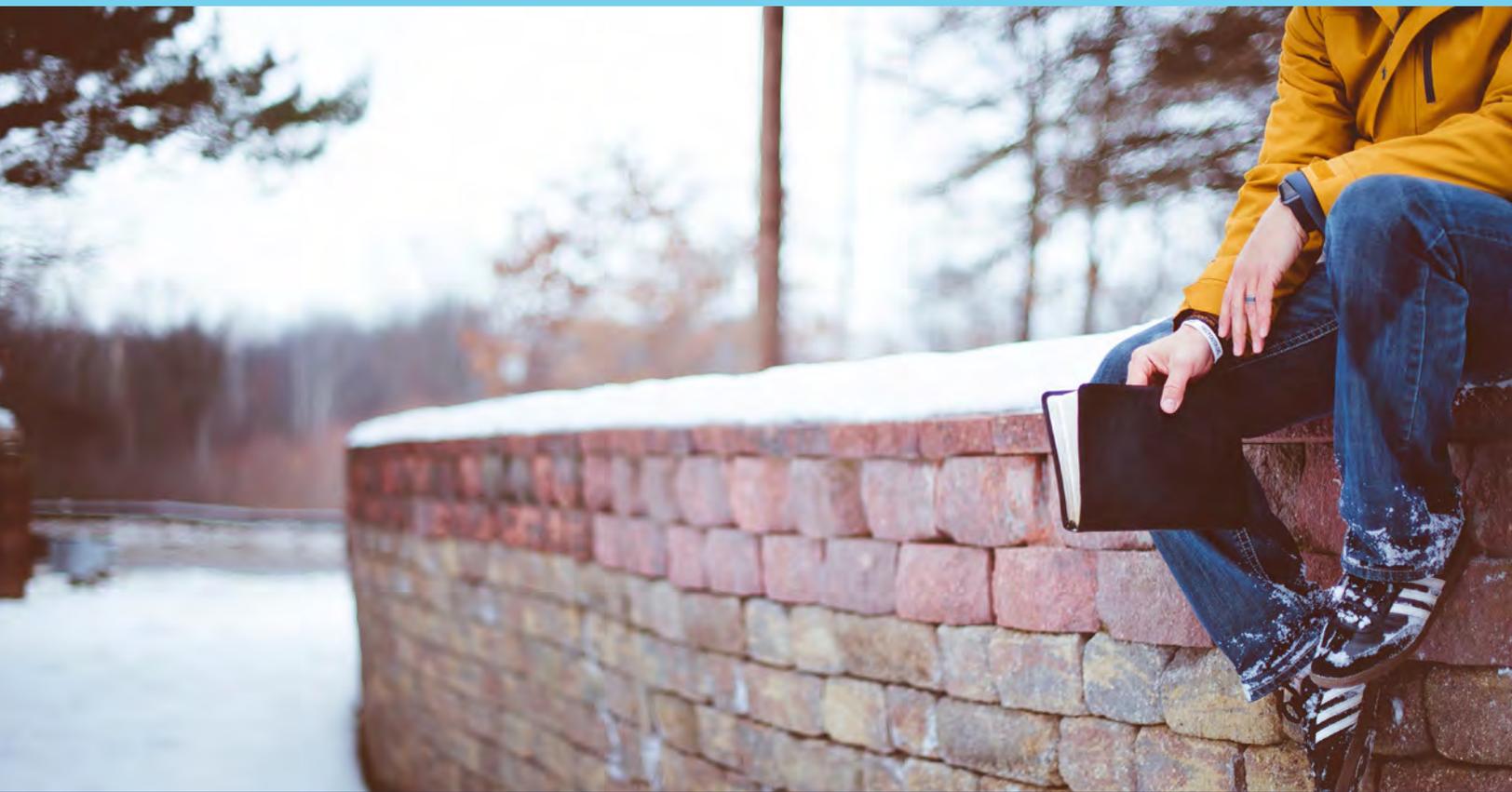
If stumped, eliminate as many incorrect answers as you can, then make an educated guess.

Find more tips at [actstudent.org](https://actstudent.org)



# Chapter 3

## AFTER THE TEST

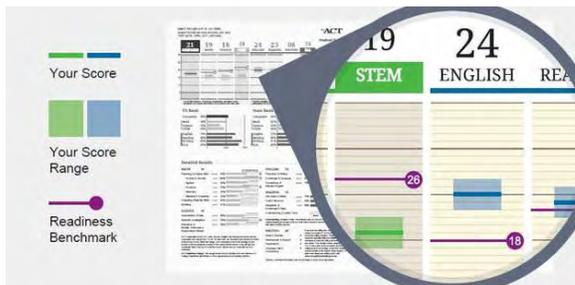


# After the Test

## What can I learn from my score report?

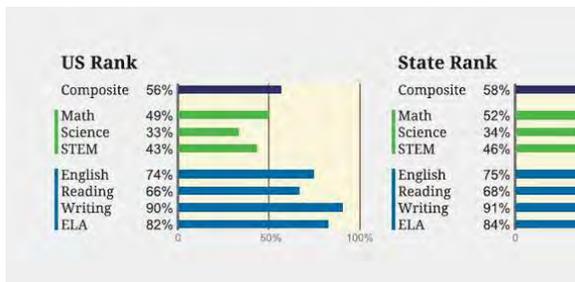
### You've taken the test and received your scores.

With the ACT, there are four aspects you should make sure to check out on the score report.



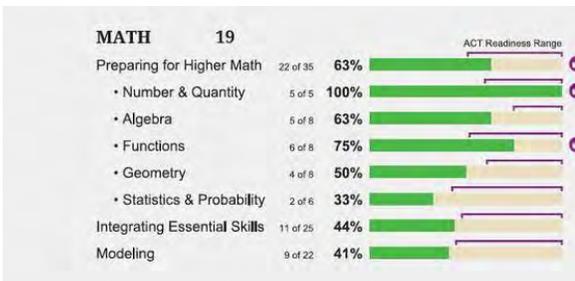
#### 1. KNOW IF YOU'RE COLLEGE READY

Scoring at or above the College Readiness Benchmark means you have a good chance of passing a first-year college class.



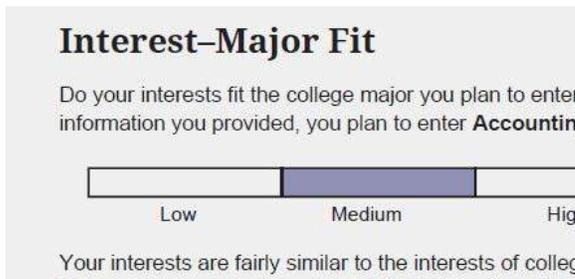
#### 2. COMPARE YOURSELF

Ranking shows the percentage of recent grads who took the ACT and received scores that are the same or lower than yours.



#### 3. FIND AREAS TO IMPROVE

The ACT Readiness Range visualizes areas where you excel and helps you find opportunities for improvement.



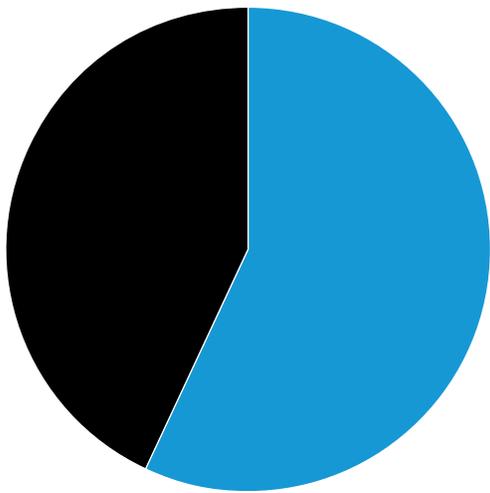
#### 4. COMPARE INTERESTS TO MAJORS

Learn if your interests are similar to those of students who actually chose the major you're considering.

# After the Test

## Should I retest?

**We advise testing again, after more schooling and a bit of prep under your belt.** That way you can use your first score as a benchmark, identify areas of improvement, and then work on these areas until you are college ready or continue to strengthen your knowledge.



Of the students  
**WHO RETOOK THE  
ACT LAST YEAR,**

**57%**

**INCREASED THEIR SCORE.**

### WHY DO WE SUGGEST THIS?

Taking the test more than once lets you see your improvement over time and identifies if you're on the path to college readiness. Also, you learn a lot as you progress further through your high school career. The numbers speak for themselves. Of the students who retook the ACT last year, 57% increased their score.

# After the Test

## How much should I study for the retest?

A lot of factors determine whether or not your score will increase, **but the average increase in score is typically based on how much time is spent preparing for a second test:**

### Average ACT Composite Score Increase Changes from First to Second Test Based on Amount of Preparation

0.7

No time spent preparing for the second test

1.0

3-6 hours of preparation

1.1

8-20 hours of preparation

1.7

20+ hours of preparation

### WILL INCREASING YOUR SCORE, EVEN BY A POINT, HAVE AN IMPACT?

**CERTAINLY!** It could increase your financial opportunities, admission possibilities, and scholarship chances.

# Resources

HELPFUL RESOURCES TO HELP  
YOU PREPARE



# Resources

## Ultimately, the most important aspect of preparing for a college readiness assessment is your mindset.

Remember to believe in yourself. Remain calm and confident. Your attitude could play a major role in how you score on a college readiness assessment.

Build your confidence before the test and become college ready by clicking on and checking out these helpful resources:

### FREE RESOURCES

- [ACT Practice Test](#)
- [ACT Question of the Day](#)
- [Sample Test Questions](#)

### AFFORDABLE TEST PREP

- [ACT<sup>®</sup> Rapid Review](#)
- [ACT Online Prep<sup>™</sup>](#)
- [The Official ACT<sup>®</sup> Prep Guide](#)

Taking the ACT test doesn't have to be stressful if you prepare and know what to expect.

**REMEMBER: YOU'VE GOT THIS!**



**ACT**<sup>®</sup>

[www.act.org](http://www.act.org)