Power Up: Math ACT Prep, Week 7

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Time Frame 35 minutes

Essential Question(s)

How can I increase my ACT score?

Summary

In this activity, students will practice pacing and using TestNav as they take an online practice ACT. This is the seventh activity in a 10-week "Power Up" series for ACT prep.

Learning Goals

- Practice and reflect on pacing to increase the number of questions answered on the math portion of the ACT.
- Navigate efficiently through TestNav during a practice test.

Attachments

- Activity Slides—Math ACT Prep, Week 7.pdf
- Activity Slides—Math ACT Prep, Week 7.pptx

Materials

- Activity Slides (attached)
- Pencil
- Paper
- Calculators
- Student devices with Internet access

5 minutes

Introduction

Teacher's Note: ACT Enhancements

The following resource has been updated to better align with the test changes that began in April 2025 for the online test and in September 2025 for the paper-pencil test. Some outside resources linked are based on the previous version of the ACT. Learn more about enhancements to the ACT in 2025.

This practice resource, while aligned to a previous version of the ACT, still provides valuable practice for students.

Introduce the activity using the attached **Activity Slides**. Share the essential question on **slide 3** and the learning objectives from **slide 4** to the extent you see fit.

Show **slide 5** and have students get their calculator, device, and scratch paper; follow regular classroom procedures for this.

Display **slide 6** and direct students to either navigate to home.testnav.com or open the TestNav application on their device.

Spend 2-3 minutes transitioning through **slides 7-11**, directing students through the steps to get to their practice test.

1. Navigate to the ACT practice test through TestNav.
2. Click “Practice Test.”
3. Click “Mathematics.”
4. Click “Mathematics - Untimed.”
5. Read the directions.
    - These are directions and advice about the test and using TestNav.
    - Students can, but do not need to, enter their name.
    - Students do not need to write final answers on a piece of paper.
6. Press the “Start” button.
7. Read the directions.
    - These are directions and advice about taking the online math test.
    - Students do not need to write final answers on a piece of paper.
8. Press the “Start” button.
9. Read the directions.
    - These are directions and advice about taking the math portion of the ACT.
    - Encourage students to read the directions now so they do not waste time on the real exam.
    - Let students know that they will have 25 minutes to answer the first 25 questions, and if they can answer more in that time, they should try.
10. Press the “Next” button to begin the test.

30 minutes

Activity

Optional Pacing

During this portion, students will be given 25 minutes to answer 25 questions. If you have more than 30 minutes for this portion, then adjust the time and number of questions that students work on accordingly.

As of May 2025, the math section in TestNav has 60 questions. Although the updated version of the ACT will have 45 questions on the math portion, encourage students to continue pacing themselves at one question per minute.

Edit the time and quantity of questions on slide 11 and, if needed, the time on slide 13 to meet your needs.

Research shows that authentic practice increases scores. Giving students as real of an experience as the actual ACT will be very beneficial to students.

Display **slide 12** and direct students to begin.

Once students start their practice test, write the starting and ending times on the board. Use the hidden **slide 13** as a reminder and example.

After 20 minutes, announce that students have 5 minutes remaining and that now is a good time to guess. Remind students to not leave any questions blank.

Teacher's Note: Guiding the Activity

When students are not taking the full time for a practice test, TestNav will not give a reminder that there are 5 minutes remaining. Be sure after 20 minutes to announce that students have 5 minutes remaining and that now is a good time to guess. Keep in mind that during an online ACT, students will not likely receive a 5-minute verbal warning, instead TestNav will notify students. Have students select answers for all remaining questions when they receive the 5-minute warning. This helps students practice that possible panicked feeling at the end of a timed test, and on the ACT, it is best to not leave questions unanswered. Use hidden **slide 14** as a reminder of this.

After the last 5 minutes, tell students to stop and put down their pencils. Display **slide 15** and have students navigate to the “End of the Section,” and click the “Submit Final Answers” button.

Show **slide 16** and have students take a moment to look at how many they answered correctly. Remind them that they were only given enough time to answer 25, not all questions.

Before you dismiss, show **slide 17**: *You Powered Up!* and have students reflect on how well they paced themselves during the practice test today.

Research Rationale

Standardized testing in high schools has long stood as a metric for assessing college readiness and school accountability (McMann, 1994). While there has been debate surrounding the accuracy of such metrics, as well as concerns regarding fairness, many institutions of higher education continue to make these scores part of the admissions process (Allensworth & Clark, 2020; Black et al., 2016; Buckley et al., 2020). Aside from admissions, it is also important to keep in mind that standardized test scores can also provide students with scholarship opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have (Klasik, 2013). Though the topic of standardized testing continues to be debated, effective test prep can ensure that our students are set up for success.

With several benefits to doing well on college admissions tests, it is important to consider how best to prepare students for this type of high stakes test. Those students from groups that may historically struggle to find success, such as those in poverty or first generation college students, especially stand to benefit from effective test preparation (Moore & San Pedro, 2021). The American College Test (ACT) is one option students have for college admissions testing that is provided both at national centers and school sites. Taking time to understand this test, including the timing, question types, rigor, and strategies for approaching specific questions can help to prepare students to do their best work on test day and ensure their score is a more accurate representation of what they know (Bishop & Davis-Becker, 2016).

Resources

- Allensworth, E. M., & Clark, K. (2020). High school GPAs and ACT scores as predictors of college completion: Examining assumptions about consistency across high schools. Educational Researcher, 49(3), 198-211.
- Bishop, N.S. & Davis-Becker, S. (2016). Preparing examinees for test taking: Guidelines for test developers and test users. 2nd edition. Crocker, L. (Ed). In Handbook of test development (pp. 129-142). Routledge.
- Black, S. E., Cortes, K. E., & Lincove, J. A. (2016). Efficacy Versus Equity: What Happens When States Tinker With College Admissions in a Race-Blind Era? Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 38(2), 336–363. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44984542
- Buckley, J., Baker, D., & Rosinger, K. (2020). Should State Universities Downplay the SAT?. Education Next, 20(3).
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- McMann, P. K. (1994). The effects of teaching practice review items and test-taking strategies on the ACT mathematics scores of second-year algebra students. Wayne State University. https://www.monroeccc.edu/sites/default/files/upward-bound/McMannP.-the-effects-of-teaching-practice-review-items-ACT-mathematics-second-year-algebra.pdf
- Moore, R., & San Pedro, S. Z. (2021). Understanding the Test Preparation Practices of Underserved Learners. ACT Research & Policy. Issue Brief. ACT, Inc. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED616526.pdf