Power Up: English ACT Prep, Week 3

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Time Frame 35 minutes

Essential Question(s)

- How can I increase my ACT score?

Summary

In this English ACT prep activity, students focus on punctuation conventions. First, students identify "grammar fails" with some poor grammar depicted in real-world examples. Then, students review eight of the most prevalent punctuation standards through a "What Do You Meme?" and Padlet activity. Then, students apply their understanding by reading a passage and answering questions. This is the third activity in a 10-week "Power Up" series for ACT prep.

Learning Goals

- Apply proper use of apostrophes, commas, colons, and semicolons in real-world scenarios.
- Identify when these rules are broken.

Attachments

- Activity Slides—English ACT Prep, Week 3.pptx
- Anita Garibaldi Passage—English ACT Prep, Week 3.docx
- Anita Garibaldi Passage—English ACT Prep, Week 3.pdf
- Skill Sets Check—English ACT Prep, Week 3 - Spanish.docx
- Skill Sets Check—English ACT Prep, Week 3 - Spanish.pdf
- Skill Sets Check—English ACT Prep, Week 3.docx
- Skill Sets Check—English ACT Prep, Week 3.pdf
- What Do You Meme—English ACT Prep, Week 3 - Spanish.docx
- What Do You Meme—English ACT Prep, Week 3 - Spanish.pdf
- What Do You Meme—English ACT Prep, Week 3.docx
- What Do You Meme—English ACT Prep, Week 3.pdf

Materials

- Activity Slides (attached)
- Skill Sets Check handout (attached, 1 per student)
- What Do You Meme handout (optional; attached, 1 per student)
- Anita Garibaldi Passage handout (attached, 1 per student)
- Goal Setting Handout (from Week 1)
- Pen and paper

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.

Teacher's Note: Padlet Preparation

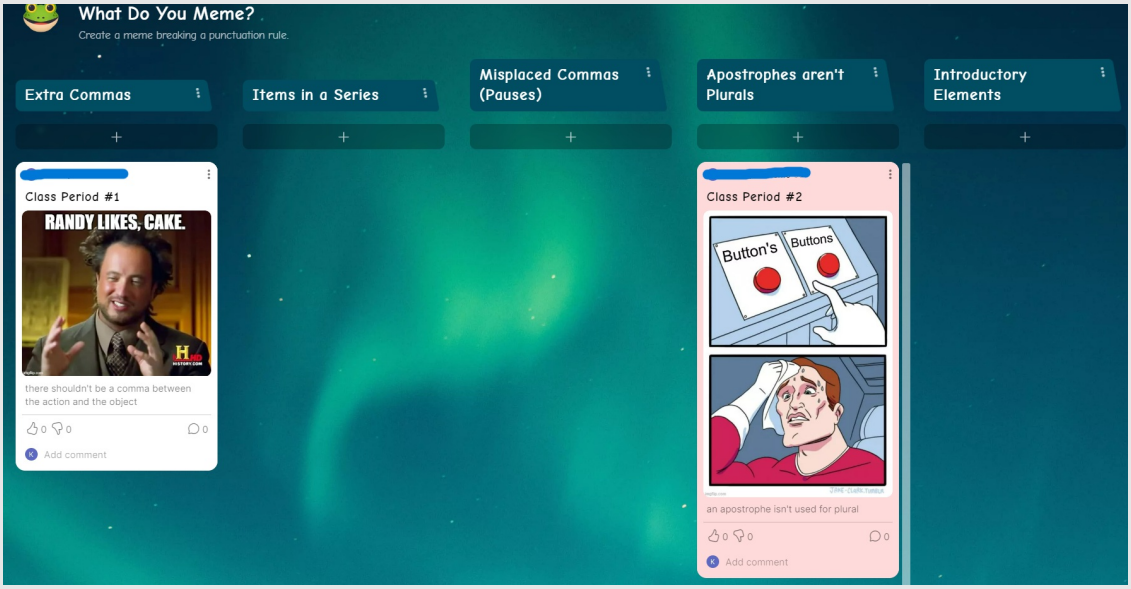
Prior to the activity, set up the following:

Padlet: Option 1 - Copy Existing

1. Go to padlet.com.
2. Log in to or create a Padlet account.
3. Select the What Do You Meme? link.
4. Select "Remake" to create a copy of this Padlet on your own account.
5. If you are keeping the same Padlet for all of your class sections, be sure to go to "Settings" > "Layout" > "Sort." Then, under the header "Date Published," select "Newest to Oldest" so that you can see the current class's submissions first.
6. Once you have made all of your selections and set up your Padlet, like the one shown below, click the "Open share settings" arrow. (*Note*: If you are making a new Padlet for each class then repeat step 4 and choose whatever "Layout" setting you want).
7. Click "Get QR code," and either copy the image of the QR code or click "DOWNLOAD."
8. Put your QR code on **slide 14**.

Padlet: Option 2 - Make Your Own

1. Go to padlet.com.
2. Log in to or create a Padlet account.
3. Create a Padlet using the template below. Consider using the "Wall with Sections" format and add the rules as column headings.
4. Repeat steps 5-8 above if using one Padlet for multiple classes.



If you would prefer not to use these digital resources, see the "Alternative Option: Memes and Padlet" note at the end of the Activity section.

Use the attached **Activity Slides** to facilitate the activity.

As students enter the classroom, display **slide 3** and use the Bell Ringer strategy to begin.

Have students find a partner or assign partners and direct them to get out a piece of paper. Ask students to discuss and then write down the "grammar fails" about the real-world examples on the following slides.

Show **slide 4**. Give students time to write down their observations, then ask for a volunteer to share the grammar fail about each image. Ensure students notice that in example 1 the commas are missing from the list. It should read, “Rachael Ray finds inspiration in cooking, her family, and her dog.” In example 2, a comma is needed to reduce ambiguity and should read, “Unable to eat, Diarrhea.” Be sure students correctly identify the missing commas before moving to the next slide.

Repeat this for **slide 5**, emphasizing the error for each example:

- Example 3: This is a misuse of a possessive apostrophe. “Signs” should be plural, not possessive.
- Example 4: This is missing the introductory comma after “man.”

Transition through **slides 6-7** to introduce students to the lesson’s essential question and learning objectives to the extent you feel necessary.

Show **slide 8** and emphasize to students that punctuation, the topic of today’s activity, makes up one of the largest percentages of questions on the English portion of the ACT.

15 minutes

Activity

Pass out a copy of the attached **Skill Sets Check** handout to every student and have them try to correct the non-example sentences on the chart by making marks on the sample sentences. For example, they can draw a line through the comma for the sentence: “Randy likes, cake.” Explain that the blank column will be used in the next phase of the activity where they will create more sentences that break the punctuation rules. As students work through marking the sentences, go through **slides 9-11** to show students how to correct the sentences. Students will be exploring each rule in more depth later on so just take 1-2 minutes for this activity.

Transition to **slide 12** and introduce the What Do You Meme? strategy. Preview the activity by explaining to students that they will work independently to create a meme that breaks their assigned rule from their handout, then they will post their meme in Padlet. Lastly, they will write non-examples of each rule in the space provided on their handout. Then they will correct as they did before with the provided sample sentences. Tell students they will choose one of the meme templates provided, as shown on slide 12. Explain that Template 1 should be written as a compare/contrast scenario, and Template 2 can be more of an example sentence.

Display **slide 13**. Next, assign students a punctuation rule from the handout by numbering them off 1-7. For example, have the first student create a meme with extra commas. The next student would create a meme for the second rule: items in a series. Direct them to select a template and go to the corresponding link on the slide, both from imgflip.com/, to generate their own original meme. Give them time to create their own memes and rationale (the text illustrating how the rule is broken).

Move to **slide 14** to provide steps for how to get their meme from imgflip to Padlet. Transition to **slide 15** after all students have accessed Padlet. Direct students to follow the directions on the slide and upload their meme to Padlet, add their class period where it says “subject,” and write their rationale for how they broke their rule in the “caption.” Using the Padlet that you created, show them the different columns and explain that each column represents one of the rules they were assigned. Ask students to move their uploaded meme to the correct column.

Display the Padlet on your screen. As a class, review a few of the students’ memes using Padlet and have all students explain the rule, how it was broken, and what it should be. Display **slide 16** and remind students to add their non-example sentence to their Skill Sets Check handout in the “examples” column next to their assigned rule and then have them fix the non-example marking out or adding the correct punctuation as needed

Teacher's Note: Meme Templates and Pacing

We chose the meme templates so that students did not waste time sifting through all the different options. If you have time, feel free to allow more freedom in template selection.

Alternative Option: Memes and Padlet

If you would prefer an alternative to using digital resources, use the attached **What Do You Meme** handout. Have students complete it by following the same directions as they would the digital version. Edit slides 13-15 as needed.

Students can then take a photo of their work and upload it to Padlet or just hang their meme on the wall of your classroom. If you plan to have students hang their work around the classroom, prep your classroom by putting labels on the wall as shown in the Padlet preparation directions above (so that students can still organize their memes according to the rule they were using).

Then have students use the Gallery Walk strategy to observe their peers' creations. Direct them to write down sample sentences on their Skill Sets Check handout. For the sake of time, you can leave up the memes and have students write down their sample sentences throughout the week.

Please note that this alternative version may extend the allotted time for this portion of the activity.

15 minutes

Wrap-Up

Next, move to **slide 17** and review the ACT English test-taking tip provided. Explain that they should read the adapted instructions now to become familiar with the directions. Encourage students to ask questions about the instructions now so that on *test day* they will not waste time reading directions.

Pass out the attached **Anita Garibaldi Passage** handout and instruct students to read the passage independently and answer the questions. Give students approximately five minutes to complete this task. This timing will support pacing in preparation for the real test day. Use the K20 timer on **slide 18** and allow students to work silently.

Teacher's Note:

While the provided timer is set for 4 minutes, ideally students should be able to complete a passage with 5 questions in 3.5 minutes. As there are 5 a total of 50 questions on the test with only 35 minutes which makes it 42 seconds per question.

Afterwards, use **slides 19-20** to facilitate class discussion about their experience. Talk about what struggles students had, what was easy, what they did not know at all. Ask them to reflect silently on what they personally need to work on and how they think they can accomplish it. Suggest that they add these details to their Goal Setting handout from Week 1.

Show and explain **slide 21** which reveals a sneak peek at what will happen next time but also provides students a "side quest" where they are asked to finish adding examples to their Skill Sets Check handout either from the class Padlet or other "real-world" examples.

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

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