Power Up: English ACT Prep, Week 5

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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 review the content from the past four prep activities. First, students finish going over the answers from week four's reading passage activity. Then, students annotate their collection of Skill Sets Check handouts using the Rose, Bud, and Thorn strategy, which then prepares them to practice annotating ACT questions using the strategy Categorical Highlighting. Finally, they end the class revisiting their Goals handout from week 1. This is the fifth activity in a 10-week "Power Up" series for ACT prep.

Learning Goals

- Recognize the type of question on the English portion of the ACT.
- Understand what the type of question is asking for to answer questions more quickly.

Attachments

- Activity Slides—English ACT Prep, Week 5.pdf
- Activity Slides—English ACT Prep, Week 5.pptx
- Inflation A—English ACT Prep, Week 5.docx
- Inflation A—English ACT Prep, Week 5.pdf

Materials

- Activity Slides (attached)
- White Water Worrier handout (from week 4)
- Skill Sets Check handouts (from weeks 2, 3, and 4)
- Inflation A handout (attached, 1 per student)
- Goal Setting handout (from week 1)
- Highlighters (3 different colors, 1 set per student)
- Pen/pencil

10 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: Time Saver & Purpose

After collecting the students' White Water Worrier handout during week 4's activity, make note of the most frequently missed questions and plan to review those in more detail during this activity. This activity begins with reviewing the answers from the questions from the previous week before reviewing the grammar rules learned throughout weeks 2-4.

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

Pass out students' **White Water Worrier** handouts from "Power Up: English ACT Prep, Week 4." Explain that you will be reviewing the correct answers and explanations now. Transition through **slides 3-4** and review the correct answers. Explain the reasoning behind each answer with as much detail as you feel necessary. Also use this time to facilitate a class discussion about their experience: where were students' struggles, what did they find easy, or what did they not know at all.

Transition through **slides 5-6** and review the essential question and learning objectives as much as you see fit explaining that today will be a review day of the past three weeks of ACT prep content.

Display **slide 7** and show students that they have now "leveled-up" in one of the main sections of the English subject test, the Conventions of Standard English, which consists of usage, punctuation, and sentence structure and formation. This section accounts for about 55% of the English portion of the test. Display **slide 8** and ask students to indicate how prepared they are feeling answering these types of questions using the following method:

- Thumbs up - "I got this!"
- Thumbs sideways - "I think I got this!"
- Thumbs down - "I don't get this!"

20 minutes

Activity

Direct students to take out their **Skill Sets Check** handouts from weeks 2, 3, and 4. Move to **slide 9** and introduce students to the instructional strategy Rose, Bud, and Thorn. Have students pick one rose, one bud, and one thorn from among the three Skill Sets Check handouts. Explain that students are to reflect on their notes from previous ACT prep weeks by writing the following words in the margins next to the rule they are thinking about:

- Rose - This rule is beautifully easy to understand.
- Bud - I'm starting to blossom with this rule.
- Thorn - This rule is painful to grasp!

Share the following example:

- Rose - "Using semicolons and colons is beautifully easy to understand."
- Bud - "I'm starting to understand comparatives and superlatives."
- Thorn - "When to use and how to identify coordinating and subordinating conjunctions is painful to grasp!"

Give students about 5 minutes to annotate their handouts and then come back together as a class and discuss what they made note of.

Teacher's Note: Skill Sets Check Handouts

Students should already have the Skill Sets Check handouts from each week of the previous Power Up activities:

- "Power Up: English ACT Prep, Week 2" (Usage)
- "Power Up: English ACT Prep, Week 3" (Punctuation)
- "Power Up: English ACT Prep, Week 4" (Sentence Structure)

If time allows, have students write down a "rose, bud, and thorn" per handout.

Transition to **slide 10** and share the test taking tip: *Use the answer choices to figure out what the question is asking for*. Point out to students that on the English portion of the ACT the test, questions are not often written like other sections of the ACT. Specifically, part of the passage is underlined and then there is just a list of answer choices next to the question number, so students will need to infer what the test is asking them to look for (i.e. what grammar or topic development rules are being assessed).

Next, pass out the attached **Inflation A** handout and three different colored highlighters to each student. Explain that before students start reading and answering questions, they will annotate the practice passage using their Skill Sets Check handouts.

Display **slide 11** and introduce the Categorical Highlighting strategy. Instruct students to use three different colored highlighters one for each type of question and identify whether it's a Usage question (week 2), a Punctuation question (week 3), or a Sentence Structure and Formation question (week 4). Explain that students should use their notes from the Skill Sets Check handouts to help them determine how to categorize and highlight each question. Give students about 5 minutes to annotate their questions.

Once students complete their highlighting, transition through **slides 12-14** and facilitate a class discussion about the correct responses on how each question is classified. As you go over each answer, ask students to reflect on the following questions: *What patterns or characteristics did you notice about each category of questions? What words or phrases stood out to you? What did you need to know in order to answer the question?* Have students share-out as time permits. Then, give them time to write some of the responses on the back of their Skill Sets Check handouts.

5 minutes

Wrap-Up

Transition into having students reevaluate their actions to reach their previously set goal. Research shows that while setting goals is great it is in revisiting and measuring the actions taken that help obtain a goal. Have students take out their Goal Setting handout from week 1. Briefly transition through **slides 15-16** to remind students of what their ACT goal unlocks and to highlight how realistic it is to achieve these goals. For example, answering just over 50% of the questions correctly should earn a student a 19 on the English section of the ACT helping them avoid having to take remedial classes.

Transition to **slide 17** and invite students to set a new action reflective of their previously chosen goal and current actions taken. First, ask students to reflect on what actions they had previously chosen and how well they think they've grown because of them. Then, tell students to choose at least one new action either from the list or one they have thought of to add to their table.

If time permits, have students share-out what actions they have taken and what actions they plan to start.

Show and explain **slide 18** which reveals a sneak peek at what will happen next time but also provides students a "side quest" where they are encouraged to answer the questions from the Inflation A handout they previously only annotated. Encourage students to try their side quest between now and next week as these quests are intended to improve their ACT skills.

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.
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