Power Up: Reading ACT Prep, Week 5

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Published by *K20 Center*

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Time Frame 35 minutes

Essential Question(s)

- How can I raise my ACT score?

Summary

In this reading ACT prep activity, students view a short video about ACT reading tips and reflect on what they have learned about the ACT reading section so far. Students then review cause and effect relationships by reading a passage about the Cold War and then answer nine ACT-style questions. This is the fifth activity in a 10-week "Power Up" series for ACT prep.

Learning Goals

- Identify cause and effect relationships
- Reflect on new knowledge about the ACT reading test

Attachments

- Activity Slides—Reading ACT Prep, Week 5.pdf
- Activity Slides—Reading ACT Prep, Week 5.pptx
- Passage—Reading ACT Prep, Week 5.docx
- Passage—Reading ACT Prep, Week 5.pdf
- Questions (Teacher Guide)—Reading ACT Prep, Week 5.docx
- Questions (Teacher Guide)—Reading ACT Prep, Week 5.pdf
- Questions—Reading ACT Prep, Week 5.docx
- Questions—Reading ACT Prep, Week 5.pdf

Materials

- Activity Slides (attached)
- Passage handout (attached; one per student)
- Questions handout (attached; one per student)
- Questions (Teacher Guide) document (attached; for teacher use)
- Goal Setting handout (previously used in Power Up: Reading ACT Prep, Week 1)
- Sticky notes (one 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.

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

Provide a sticky note to each student then move to **slide 5** which has a short video about ACT reading tips and strategies. Tell students to look for one tip that stands out to them as they watch the video. Move to **slide 6** and play the video.

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=sf5GbCgjnnM

After the video, have students write down what they think is the most helpful tip on their sticky note. Using the Commit and Toss strategy, have students crumple up the sticky note and throw it up in the air, then have each student pick up a sticky note off the floor and read it. Ask for a few volunteers to read the tip on the sticky note they picked up. Display **slide 7** and briefly recap the tips that were shared in the video.

15 minutes

Activity

Move to **slide 8** and pass out the attached **Passage** and attached **Questions** handout to each student. Tell students to read the passage and answer the nine questions in ten minutes. This helps students start to practice pacing for the actual ACT. Use the embedded 10-minute timer on the slide to time students. Remind students to pace themselves so that they read the passage in four minutes and answer the questions in six minutes. Students should spend ten minutes on each passage and corresponding question. Provide more time after the timer ends if needed.

Move to **slide 9** and have students check their work to self-assess how they did. If students have questions about answers, use the attached **Questions (Teacher Guide)** document, which provides explanations for the correct answers to these ACT-style questions.

10 minutes

Wrap-Up

Display **slide 10** and have students take out their Goal Setting handout from week one if possible. If students do not have their Goal Setting handout, have them use a piece of notebook paper. Ask students to think about what they have learned about the ACT reading section test so far, as they are now halfway through the ten-week ACT prep series. Have students use the 3-2-1 strategy to respond to the prompts on slide 10 either on the back of their Goal Setting handout or notebook paper. After providing time for students to write down responses, have them share their thoughts with another student.

Display **slide 11**. Remind students that reading weekly is a great way to prepare for the ACT reading section.

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).
- *K20 Center 10-minute timer*. YouTube. (2021b, September 21). https://youtu.be/9gy-1Z2Sa-c?si=a7h75m0FduaHBSsU
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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
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