Power Up: Reading ACT Prep, Week 8

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Time Frame 35 minutes

Essential Question(s)

- How can I increase my ACT score?

Summary

In this reading ACT prep activity, students review how vocabulary questions are asked on the ACT. First, students practice using context clues to understand the meaning of unknown words. Next, students review tips for taking the ACT reading section before practicing nine ACT-style questions. Lastly, students revisit the goals they set in the first week of this series. This is the eighth activity in a 10-week "Power Up" series for ACT prep.

Learning Goals

- Understand how to interpret vocabulary in the context of an ACT reading passage.

Attachments

- ACT Reading Tips—Reading ACT Prep, Week 8 - Spanish.pdf
- ACT Reading Tips—Reading ACT Prep, Week 8.pdf
- Activity Slides—Reading ACT Prep, Week 8.pdf
- Activity Slides—Reading ACT Prep, Week 8.pptx
- Passage—Reading ACT Prep, Week 8.docx
- Passage—Reading ACT Prep, Week 8.pdf
- Questions (Teacher Guide)—Reading ACT Prep, Week 8.docx
- Questions (Teacher Guide)—Reading ACT Prep, Week 8.pdf
- Questions—Reading ACT Prep, Week 8.docx
- Questions—Reading ACT Prep, Week 8.pdf

Materials

- Activity Slides (attached)
- ACT Reading Tips handout (attached; one per student)
- Passage handout (attached; one per student)
- Questions handout (attached; one per student)
- Questions (Teacher Guide) document (attached; for teacher use)
- Goal Setting handout (from week 1)

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 objective on **slide 4**.

Place students into groups of four. By using the Numbered Heads Together strategy, assign each student a number 1-4 within each group. Move to **slide 5** and ask students to read the sentence on the slide: *There was a pile of **smoalter** dishes in the sink, so I had to load the dishwasher*. Have students discuss in their group what the word in bold means based on the sentence. Remind the class that everyone needs to be ready to share. Ask for a volunteer that was assigned number one to share what the group thinks the bolded word means. Then, ask for a new volunteer that was also assigned the number one if they agree and how they came to their conclusion.

Repeat this process with **slides 6-8** and have students with different assigned numbers share for their group each time.

Teacher's Note: Sample Student Responses

1. I used the context clues, dishes and sink, to infer that smoalter meant dirty.
2. I used the context clue of asking my Mom for something to go to the movies to infer that frindle meant money.
3. I inferred that quibberdoo meant award because a dog was rescued from drowning.
4. I used the context clues of class and learner's permit to infer that glitchlett meant driving/driver's ed

After reviewing all of the words, display **slide 9**. Ask students how the same strategies could be applied to questions on the ACT reading test. Remind students that if they encounter a word they are not familiar with, they can use the other words in the sentence to infer the meaning of the unknown word.

20 minutes

Activity

Pass out the attached **ACT Reading Tips** handout to each student and move to **slide 10**. Provide time for students to review the tricks and tips. Have students draw a star next to each tip they are already using when they answer practice ACT-style questions. Ask students to identify one tip they are not currently practicing but would like to try to use when they practice the next set of ACT-style questions.

Pass out the attached **Passage** and **Questions** handouts to each student. Move to **slide 11**. Remind students that when taking the ACT reading section, they have approximately ten minutes on each passage and set of questions, so they are practicing the pacing of the test. Start the 10-minute timer on the slide and have students individually read the passage and answer questions before the timer expires.

Display **slide 12** and have students check their answers. 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.

5 minutes

Wrap-Up

Move to **slide 13** and have students take out the Goal Setting handout they completed during week 1. Provide time for students to review their actions and mark dates for when they practiced their action. Have students select one more action for themselves that they can practice before taking the ACT again.

Display **slide 14** and congratulate students on their diligence towards increasing their ACT score. Tell students that the next time they will take a practice ACT reading test so they will need their personal devices to be charged and ready to go when class begins.

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. (2021, September 21). K20 Center 9-minute timer. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/ZvN435zg2zE?si=4ToRlQx-IcnQwP81
- K20 Center. (n.d.) Numbered heads together. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/2476
- Klasik, D. (2013). The ACT of enrollment: The college enrollment effects of state-required college entrance exam testing. Educational Researcher, 42(3), 151–160. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23462378
- 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