Power Up: English ACT Prep, Week 7

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Published by *K20 Center*

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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 pacing and annotating the online test. First, students complete a guided exploration of TestNav for the English portion of a practice ACT. Then, students practice pacing skills by reading a passage and answering the corresponding questions. This is the seventh activity in a 10-week "Power Up" series for ACT prep.

Learning Goals

- Explore the annotation tools available through TestNav.
- Apply pacing skills to increase the number of questions answered.

Attachments

- Activity Slides—English ACT Prep, Week 7.pptx
- Inflation B—English ACT Prep, Week 7.docx
- Inflation B—English ACT Prep, Week 7.pdf
- TestNav Tasks—English ACT Prep, Week 7 - Spanish.docx
- TestNav Tasks—English ACT Prep, Week 7 - Spanish.pdf
- TestNav Tasks—English ACT Prep, Week 7.docx
- TestNav Tasks—English ACT Prep, Week 7.pdf

Materials

- Activity Slides (attached)
- TestNav Tasks handout (attached, 1 per student)
- Inflation B handout (attached, 1 per student)
- Device with internet access (1 per student)
- Pencil/pens

15 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.

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

Transition through **slides 3-4** and review the essential question and learning objectives as much as you see fit.

Pass out the attached **TestNav Tasks** handout to each student. Display **slide 5** and have students use their device to navigate to home.testnav.com or access the application on their device if the application is installed. Tell students to follow the steps on the slide to get to an untimed English practice test. The options of *Text to Speech* and *Screen Reader* are not available during the actual ACT unless the student has accommodations, so direct students to “English - Untimed” for this activity.

Once all students have located the untimed practice test, move to **slide 6**. Give students ten minutes to explore the TestNav features and complete their handout by taking notes regarding different tools.

Display **slide 7** and ensure that students have explored each of the tools available for the English section of the practice ACT. Use the labeled image on the slide to point out to students that there is a difference between how the written and online test versions label the question number in the passage. For written tests, there is usually a number underneath the underlined part of the passage that the question refers to. For online tests, the part underlined will become highlighted as the corresponding question appears on the screen. Help students notice that there are multiple parts of the passage underlined on slide 7, but the yellow highlighted part is what the question refers to. This is not to be confused with what students can choose to highlight with the highlighter tool.

Ask students to reflect on which tools were helpful and which they would use.

Teacher's Note: Time Constraints

Each student should decide their best approach to taking the English section of the ACT. Many students may prefer to not use the online tools available to ensure they have time to answer all of the questions in the time provided.

10 minutes

Activity

Transition to **slide 8** and review the pacing test-taking tip. Explain the following to the class, in as much detail as you feel necessary:

- The underlined parts of a passage are what the questions will focus on, so one strategy is to read through the passage and stop after each underlined section and answer the correlating question next to it. If they do not know the answer, advise that they make their best guess and select an answer choice while still marking or "bookmarking" the question to return to later if time permits. It's best to move on to the next question rather than spend too much time on one they don't know as the next question may be easier.
- There are usually at least two questions at the end of the passage that reflect the entire passage's content. This is why it is important to read the passage all the way through.

Move to **slide 9** and pass out the attached **Inflation B** handout to each student. Direct students to read the passage and answer the questions. Use the 10-Minute Timer to help students get a feel for how pacing needs to be on the actual test.

10 minutes

Wrap-Up

Once the timer expires, transition through **slides 10-13** to provide students with the correct answers and explanations. Use this time to allow students to ask questions.

Introduce students to the What? So What? Now What? strategy and show **slide 14**. Ask students to think about what they learned today. Then have them briefly discuss with a partner why knowing how the tools in TestNav work or why practicing pacing matters. Then ask for volunteers to share with the class how they think they might use what they learned today on the real ACT. Are there online tools that they plan to use? Are there tools they might avoid using due to time?

Display **slide 15**: *You Powered Up!* Inform students that next week they will take an online practice test. Explain to students their "side quest" is to choose a paragraph from any reading and to identify the purpose of each sentence: topic sentence, claim, evidence, reasoning, or transitions.

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 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 and 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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- Buckley, J., Baker, D., & Rosinger, K. (2020). Should state universities downplay the SAT? Education Next, 20(3).
- K20 Center. (2021, September 21). K20 Center 10 minute timer. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gy-1Z2Sa-c&list=PL-aUhEQeaZXLMF3fltNDxiuSkEr0pq0c2&index=12
- K20 Center. (n.d.). What? So what? Now what? Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/95
- 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
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- 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
- TestNav. (n.d.). Where do you want to go? https://home.testnav.com/