



# Power Up ACT Prep



Matthew McDonald, Shayna Pond, Jared Whaley

Published by K20 Center

*This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)*

**Time Frame** 45 minutes

## Essential Question(s)

- What strategies and resources can educators use to prepare students effectively for success on the ACT exam?

## Summary

This professional development activity introduces some of the more effective strategies for preparing for the ACT. The goals of this activity are to access prior knowledge of the ACT and use the lessons already prepared to assist students in increasing their scores.

## Learning Goals

- Assess prior knowledge of the ACT
- Experience a “Power Up ACT” Lesson
- Explore how the “Power Up ACT” curriculum can be implemented within existing classes

## Attachments

- [Instructional Strategy Resource Note Sheet—Power Up ACT Prep.docx](#)
- [Instructional Strategy Resource Note Sheet—Power Up ACT Prep.pdf](#)
- [LEARN Scavenger Hunt—Power Up ACT Prep.docx](#)
- [LEARN Scavenger Hunt—Power Up ACT Prep.pdf](#)
- [Passage—Reading ACT Prep, Week 2.docx](#)
- [Passage—Reading ACT Prep, Week 2.pdf](#)
- [Presentation Slides—Power Up ACT Prep.pptx](#)
- [Questions—Reading ACT Prep, Week 2.docx](#)
- [Questions—Reading ACT Prep, Week 2.pdf](#)

## Materials

- Presentation Slides (attached)
- Passage handout (attached; one per participant)
- Questions handout (attached; one per participant)
- LEARN Scavenger Hunt (attached; one per participant)
- Highlighters or colored pencils (three colors per participant)
- Sticky Notes (optional)

5 minutes

## Engage

Use the attached **Presentation Slides**. Display **slide 2**. Introduce yourself and welcome participants to the session.

### Facilitator's Note

Included as part of this professional learning session is an **Instructional Strategy/Resource Note Sheet**. This enables participants, particularly those who are not going to be engaged in ACT preparation directly, to gain beneficial instructional strategies from this session.

Hand out and introduce the **Instructional Strategy/Resource Note Sheet**. Let participants know that even if they do not teach ACT Prep, then they can at least walk away with strategies that can be used with students in any content. When participants see a strategy in use, they should record how it is used and how they might use it in their own contexts.

Display **slide 3** and introduce participants to the [Fiction in the Facts](#) strategy. Give participants time to view the statements and decide which are fact and which are fiction. Then, have participants share their answers for each statement. Move to **slide 4** and ask participants to reflect on the strategy, including how it was used in this session and how they might use it. Let participants know they will do this for each strategy throughout the session.

On **slide 5** share the Essential Question, followed by the Session Goals on **slide 6**.

**Slide 7** begins the model ACT prep activity: [Power Up: Reading ACT Prep, Week 2 - Finding Main Ideas and Supporting Details](#).

15 minutes

## Explore

### Facilitator's Note

You can choose any model ACT activity that will best meet your participants' needs based on content area.

- [English](#)
- [Mathematics](#)
- [Reading](#)
- [Science](#)

Introduce the model activity participants will be going through on **slide 8**: Power Up: Reading ACT Prep, Week 2

Share the essential question on **slide 9** and the learning objectives from **slide 10**.

Move to **slide 11** and introduce the [Always, Sometimes, or Never True](#) strategy to participants. On **slide 12**, read the statement on the slide: *The ACT reading test is divided into four passages*. Ask participants to think for a moment; then ask for a volunteer to share whether they believe the statement is always true, sometimes true, or never true. Move to **slide 13**, which reveals that there are always four passages on the reading portion of the ACT. The slide also provides additional information about the exam: the test takes 35 minutes, and there are 40 questions on the reading test.

Repeat this process with additional questions on **slides 14-17**.

Move to **slide 18** and introduce the strategies that will be used in this next section, [Fist to Five](#) and [Categorical Highlighting](#).

Pass out the attached **Passage** handout to each student and move to **slide 19**. Ask participants to look at the information provided at the top of the handout. Ask participants to consider whether the passage is fiction or nonfiction and use their hands to indicate their answer. Direct participants hold up one finger for fiction or two fingers for nonfiction. Confirm that the passage is *nonfiction*.

Move to **slide 20** and review the four types of passages that are on the ACT reading test: literary narrative, social science, humanities, and natural science.

- **Literary Narrative:** often excerpts from short stories, novels, memoirs, or personal essays.
- **Social Science:** often a straightforward discussion of a topic from psychology, history, political science, etc.
- **Humanities:** often a nonfiction, informational passage about a topic from art, philosophy, theater, etc.
- **Natural Science:** often a detailed nonfiction passage about a science topic.

Ask participants to hold up one, two, three, or four fingers (as indicated on the slide) to represent which type of passage is on their "The Passage" handout. Confirm with participants that the passage type is *Social Science*.

Display **slide 21**. Ask participants to consider what the purpose of the passage is. Ask participants to hold up one, two, or three fingers (as indicated on the slide) to represent the purpose. Confirm with participants that the purpose of the passage is to *inform*.

Reinforce to participants that it is helpful to determine whether the passage is fiction or nonfiction, the type, and the purpose of the passages before answering questions.

Move to **slide 22** and give each student three highlighters or colored pencils. Direct participants to read the passage silently and to highlight in different colors as they read the main idea of the passage, supporting details of the passage, and evidence that supports the details highlighted. After providing about ten minutes for participants to complete this, have participants partner together and review the items they chose to highlight. Have a brief class discussion about what the main idea, supporting details, and evidence of supporting details are for the passage.

Display **slide 23** and pass out the attached **Questions** handout to each student. Have participants answer the multiple-choice ACT-style questions about the passage. Review the correct answers with participants on **slide 24**.

Move to **slide 25** and congratulate participants on working to increase their ACT scores. Suggest that participants spend twenty minutes weekly reading a text to prepare further for the ACT reading section.

5 minutes

## Explain

Display **slide 26** and introduce participants to the [How am I Feeling/What Am I Thinking](#) strategy. Give participants some time to reflect on the questions before inviting a few to share out responses, especially about how they might work this curriculum into their class.

Move to **slide 27** and share the general information about K20's ACT prep curriculum.

### Facilitator's Note

Let participants know that if students qualify for free or reduced lunch, they can get up to four [ACT fee waivers](#).

15 minutes

## Extend

Transition to **slide 28** and let participants know they will now be exploring the [K20 LEARN site](#). Then on **slide 29**, share the QR code to navigate to the curriculum in LEARN. Allow participants time to explore the ACT prep curriculum collection of activities that have been published so far using the **LEARN Scavenger Hunt**. Give participants some time (10–15 minutes) to explore LEARN while filling in their [Scavenger Hunt Notes](#).

### Facilitator's Note

For those participants accessing LEARN through their phone, you might let them know that items highlighted in yellow are links.

5 minutes

## Evaluate

Display **slide 30** and introduce the [What, So What, Now What](#) strategy. Allow participants time to reflect on each statement. Encourage participants to share out some of their responses. You might also have participants respond to “Now, what will you do to support students in preparing for the ACT?” on a sticky note which can be placed in a central location for all participants to view.

Display **slide 31** and review the LEARN strategies. Give participants time to review the strategies covered in this session and to fill in their Instructional Strategy/Resource Note Sheet.



## 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 equity, 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

- ACT. (n.d.). ACT college and career readiness standards. ACT. <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/college-and-career-readiness/standards.html>
- ACT. (2022). Average act scores by state: Class of 2022. ACT. <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/2022/2022-Average-ACT-Scores-by-State.pdf>
- Kaplan Test Prep. (n.d.). What is the ACT®?. Kaplan Test Prep. <https://www.kaptest.com/act/what-is-the-act>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Always, Sometimes, or Never True. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/145>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Categorical highlighting. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/192>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Fiction in the facts. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/60>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Fist to five. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/68>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Scavenger hunt notes. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/3113>
- K20 Center. (n.d.) What, so what, now what. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/95>
- The Princeton Review. (n.d.). 4 biggest ACT myths. The Princeton Review. <https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/4-act-myths>