

Reading

40 questions

35 minutes

5 passages (4 sections) 3 long passages, 2 short (compare and contrast)

1. Timing

First, I highly recommend a stopwatch that you can start before the exam. It will save you time to see the stopwatch. In addition, you can use the same stopwatch on the ACT. You can never know how the clock will look on your ACT. You might be seated at a really bad angle and unable to see the clock well.

On the same note, the reading test is the main reason I highly recommend not taking the ACT online if you retake it. Having to look at a computer and read quickly is difficult for some people, including myself. Others may find the highlighting online tools better. In conclusion, practice online and offline to see which works best. Always practice in the forum you will use.

The timing on the ACT Reading is extremely tight even for a fast reader. Find what works for you. The only thing I do NOT suggest is breaking it down by saying I have blank minutes per question. I would do it **by section**.

I recommend spending 8 minutes on each reading section (there are 4 of them). **Read the passage before answering ANY questions unlike the English exam.** Read for approximately 4-6 minutes and answer for 2-4 minutes. If you take more time reading the passage, spend less time reading the questions.

Like the English exam, I did a time check during the exam. Unlike the English exam, I did my checks per passage not by question number. Something like the following is how I did my time breakdown:

Section one ending time 8-9 minutes

Section two ending time 16-17 minutes

Section three ending time 24 minutes

Section four ending at time called

If you notice, 11 minutes is given for the last passage. This makes it so if you spend more time on one of the other passages it will be alright.

2. Finding your perfect timing plan

If you read my other study guides you will notice this one has less content and more things about timing. That is how important timing is.

What did I do?

I took several practice tests. The first thing I realized was when I did Reading by itself, I scored better. Part of the reason reading is so hard is because you are already tired. Make sure you eat during your snack break and maybe do a little exercise to get back at it. Forget your previous tests and focus on the Reading.

The next thing I did was divide the reading tests by section. **I used a stopwatch to see how long it took me to read a passage, how long to answer questions, and how long reading time varied per subject of passage.** This allowed me to speed up certain parts of my reading tests. For example, I figured out I could do narrative passages in 6 minutes but science took me 10 minutes. (I never would have guessed this; I am good at science.)

3. Avoid this massive mistake on test day

The first time I took the ACT, I made a massive mistake on test day. After the first section (which I took 9 minutes on), I did the second passage. It was one of the sections that I know takes me longer so I planned on using the full 9 minutes. As my stopwatch passed 14 minutes, I figured I had till minute 18. **I stayed on a few questions I did not know the answer to.**

The only problem is 9 plus 9 equals 18 but 8 plus 8 equals 16. If I spend 9 minutes a passage and the science passage (last) takes me 10 minutes what is the deal?

The deal was I had five minutes at the end for the science passage (to be continued).

4. Running out of time

It is essential to ensure you get through every passage. Stick with your 8 minutes even if you speed read the passages. Make guesses on the questions you do not know. Do not sit on a question like I did and miscalculate your times (see story above).

Back to the massive mistake:

Now I had 5 minutes for that science passage. What do you do if this happens to you? Start reading the passage only to realize you will not get through? Randomly guess? What did I do? I started reading the questions and passage and then did what is below.

First, fill in the rest of the bubbles. Read the questions before the passage. This is not recommended unless you have 5 minutes or less to answer the questions. Answer as many questions as you can (to be continued).

5. The page is on fire I am reading so fast

The moral of the story is the page should be on fire. I felt like I was reading extremely fast even though I am a fast reader. At about 24 minutes (after your 3rd passage), **I took a break and closed my eyes for a second** (approximately 5-10 seconds) and stretched. Do this in between passages at your desired time.

6. The importance of underlining

Underline important parts of the passage as you go. This helped me process the information and find it later.

7. Getting lost in the passage?

Make sure you stay aware of your surroundings and do not get sucked into the readings. One way to do this is to **check your stopwatch at the beginning of the passage and once in the middle**. This way, you can stay on pace and present.

Back to the massive mistake story: I totally looked up from my desk after one of the passages like “Wow! Where am I? I thought I was reading a novel?” 😊
To be continued...

8. Two reading passages in one section? What is about to happen??

When you see two passages right next to each other on the ACT stop for a moment. **You will be comparing them**. First, I suggest reading the first one (2 min) and answering the questions that go with it. Second, read the 2nd one and answer the questions that follow. Underline as you go, underline parts of that passage that are noticeable different than the first. Third, answer the questions that compare them.

Back to that huge mistake! Do not mix the passages. Use the underlines to help you (to be continued).

9. As used in line 21, As seen in passage A, in lines 5-10...

Go back to the line it GAVE YOU!

10. A HUGE surprise! A massive mistake continued:

By the time I got ready for my 2nd exam I had my times down. I knew I could score well when not under stress. ***I had the mindset that this Reading Test would bring me to my target score. I had a good attitude about it.*** I practiced my timing by passage section subjects. A lot of ACT books brake down the Reading into sections such as Narrative, Science, ext. They are in a certain order in every test. I had already taken the test once and knew it to be true.

Then, I start my test! A massive surprise! The passages are way longer than expected. The subjects are out of order. (The science is not last?!?) I had the timing down and continued as normal. I left 10 minutes for the end as planned. I finished all the questions with approximately 1 minute left. This is the example of having your timing down. When your under pressure you will perform better when you already know how to perform.

I did not have to retake the ACT. It was not a massive mistake. 😊

Good luck!

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