

# ACT Prep

## The Scoop on the Test...

- The ACT consists of four core sections, and an optional written essay portion. The breakdown is as follows:  
English (45 minutes – 75 questions)      Math (60 minutes – 60 questions)  
Reading (40 minutes – 40 questions)      Science (35 minutes – 40 questions)
- Most of the ACT is not content based; it is based on the skills that all students should have once they complete high school.
- Colleges don't look at the ACT to see how grammatically astute you are, or how much science you know; they have placement tests for that. What they want to know is can you predict outcomes, solve problems, make inferences, and draw conclusions!

## When Should You Take It...

- The ACT is generally taken as a junior or senior.
- All juniors take it as part of the PSAE in April
- If you take it as a junior... you will gain a better idea as to which colleges you could attend, you will have multiple opportunities to retake it, and you will also have the ability to apply for early decision deadlines.
- If you take it as a senior... you can earn a higher score due to more exposure to higher levels classes, you will still have at least one opportunity to take it, and you will have plenty of time to make the regular application deadlines.

## The Science Portion...

- The test is designed to assess your ability to think like a scientist.
- The questions in this section will require you to:
  - Recognize and understand the basic features of graphs, tables, and charts, and use the concepts and information to answer questions related to the provided information
  - Use the scientific method to examine the relationship between the information provided and the conclusions drawn or hypotheses developed from experiments that have been conducted in the past.
  - Analyze the opinions and points of view of other scientists and use that information to generalize, draw conclusions, gain new information, or make predictions.

## Types of Questions...

- **Data Representation (38%)** This format presents graphic and tabular material similar to that found in science journals and texts. The questions associated with this format measure skills such as graph reading, interpretation of plotted points, and interpretation of information presented in tables, diagrams, and figures.
- **Research Summaries (45%)** Provides descriptions of one or more related experiments. The questions focus on the design of experiments and the interpretation of experimental results. (Can you identify controls, variables, and problems.)
- **Conflicting Viewpoints (17%)** Presents the opposing viewpoints of two scientists. This question style can most easily be compared to reading a debate. The "speakers" will express several ideas that they feel are right. You will then be required to compare and contrast their ideas to see where the similarities and differences lie based on differing opinions, incomplete data. These questions focus on the understanding, analysis, and comparison of alternative viewpoints or hypotheses.

## Tips to Taking the Test...

- **READ!** Read all the directions. Read all the questions carefully. Read all the answer choices.
- Eliminate as many wrong answers as possible and cross them out before making your choice or guessing. All the science test questions have two throw away answers. (They will be **OBVIOUSLY** wrong.)
- If you have a feeling about an answer go with it and don't change your mind.
- If two answers look similar, or a lot alike, chances are one of them is right. Cross off the other two and make your selection.
- Pace yourself; some questions will be hard, some will be easy. Don't try to reinvent the wheel. If you get stuck, skip it and come back to it later. Don't waste time on a question that you don't know.
- Make notes in the margins to help you remember key details, or underline the main ideas.
- Always answer every question. You don't get penalized for wrong answers; so after you eliminate the wrong ones, take a guess. Taking a guess gives you 25% chance of getting it right; skipping it gives you no chance.
- **RELAX!** The ACT is not the end of the world!