



# ACT English Quick Guide

Use this packet as a quick reference for the most important ACT English concepts and strategies

## OVERVIEW

75 questions in 45 minutes (30-40 seconds/question)

Multiple Choice - Five Passages

All questions on the ACT English fall into two main categories:

<b>GRAMMAR</b> Mechanics and usage; rules of agreement; structure	<b>RHETORICAL</b> Meaning and organization; expression of ideas; relevancy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Subject-Verb:</b> Agreement</li> <li>✓ <b>Verbs:</b> Tense, Form, Parallelism</li> <li>✓ <b>Pronouns:</b> Antecedent, Agreement, Case</li> <li>✓ <b>Punctuation:</b> Commas, Colons, Dashes</li> <li>✓ <b>Combining Sentences:</b> Independent Clauses</li> <li>✓ <b>Diction:</b> Word choice, Adverb/Adjective, Idioms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Relevancy:</b> Relate to paragraph and sentence topic</li> <li>✓ <b>Add/Delete:</b> Relevant =&gt; Add, Irrelevant =&gt; Delete</li> <li>✓ <b>Transition:</b> Connect parts before and after Addition, Comparison, Contrast, Cause-Effect</li> <li>✓ <b>Placement/Order:</b> Logical sentence position, phrases</li> <li>✓ <b>Concision/Clarity:</b> Avoid Redundancy/Repetition</li> </ul>

- Always glimpse at the answers; identifying the question type will help you to quickly decide the best approach and rules to follow. (Choices: *will eat, ate, have eaten* => focus on verb tense)
- Read first the underlined portion, getting more context by reading slightly above or below
- For rhetorical questions, skim the passage to identify main idea or paragraph topics
- Consider if **A) NO CHANGE** is incorrect and decide why; if not leave it as is and move on!
- Always consider the choice **D) DELETE/OMIT**; it's rarely given and worth looking at closely

## KEY STRATEGIES: Grammar

### Key Strategy #1: Identify the Subject & Verb and check agreement

The subject and verb are the foundation of any sentence, and all other parts describe these two. If you get lost in a longer sentence, always come back to the main subject-verb (simple sentence).

Singular **Subject** => Singular Verb:

A **musician** develops her own unique style over time.

Plural **Subjects** => Plural Verb:

Most **mistakes** result from oversight or carelessness.

*Example #1:* Don't get distracted by words or phrases in between the main subject and verb. Look for the subject before prepositional phrases (commonly beginning with "of/for/by/from/to/in/on/at"):

Teachers working in Oaktown at the local charter school implements new methods of instruction.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. is implementing
- C. implement
- D. has implemented

*The correct answer here is C. The subject (teachers) is plural and therefore the verb (implement) must also be plural. Notice that "Teachers" occurs before the "in": state the subject and verb together to find agreement.*

*Example #2:* The subject sometimes comes after the verb:

When we left the beach yesterday, there was still many people swimming.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. are
- C. were
- D. have been

*The correct answer is C. Agreement is between the verb (were) and plural subject (people).*

*Example #3:* A subject can be an entire verb phrase (gerund) acting like a noun:

Climbing the tallest mountain on all seven continents require extensive planning and focus.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. will have
- C. requires
- D. requiring

*The correct answer is C. "Climbing" is the subject requiring a singular verb "requires".*

## Key Strategy #2: Check the Verb Usage – make sure all the verbs work together

All the verbs in a sentence must coordinate and flow logically using the proper tense and structure.

- **Tense:** Reflects the time frame of the action; certain verbs change their forms depending on usage  
present: *begin, beginning*                      past: *began*                      future: *will begin*  
present perfect: *has, have begun*              past perfect: *had begun*              future perfect: *will have begun*
- **Parallel Structure:** Maintain a consistent pattern throughout (We are **running, jumping, diving...**)

Example #1: Verbs in a sentence do not always have the same tense, but must follow logically.

Because we studied extensively this weekend, we will perform very well on the real test next Tuesday.  
(Past -----leading into-----> Future)

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. were performing
- C. perform
- D. have performed

The correct answer here is A. The first action ("studied") is past, but the test is in the future.

Example #2: Many verbs take a different form depending on the tense (present, past, past perfect). This happens especially with the verb "to begin" (begin/began/begun), but with others as well.

Isabella made the varsity team at her high school, and she has swam in three races so far.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. swims
- C. have swam
- D. has swum

The correct answer here is D. The verb "swim" becomes "swum" in the present perfect tense.

Example #3: Parallel structure can apply to the structure of phrasing within the sentence.

Buckminster Fuller was admired by many for his ingenuity, but encountered scorn for his radical ideas.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. scorned the many
- C. was scorned by some
- D. many scorned him

The correct answer here is C. Mirror the structure "was admired by" with "was scorned by".