

ACT® Test Enhancements Frequently Asked Questions

K-12 Webinar Series

Accommodations:

ACT will continue to offer special accommodations to those that require them on the assessment. There are no changes to the types of accommodations that ACT has offered in the past. The enhancements will be seen in special testing forms in April for national online, September for paper and international, and Spring of 2026 testing windows for state and district customers. The special testing forms WILL have field test items. Times for students who qualify for additional time for testing can be seen on the ACT website below the practice tests. Here is a link to that page:

<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-changes/online-testing/sample-questions.html>

ACT My Answer Key (formerly Test Information Release, or TIR):

ACT will continue our practice of making student tests available with student responses during certain administrations. Those reports will NOT include field test items, only items that were used in the calculation of a student's score. The final date for the 2024-2025 school year will be February 2025, prior to the enhancement's release. Dates for next year will be available prior to registration opening in July.

Benchmarks:

The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are reviewed and evaluated routinely regardless of changes made to the design or content of the assessment. That will continue, and any updates to benchmarks will be shared with stakeholders in advance of implementation.

ACT does not have a College Readiness Benchmark for the Composite score; only for the individual section tests. The planned enhancements are not expected to have an effect on the meaning of the current benchmarks. This will be evaluated with upcoming research studies.

Blueprint:

ACT will be updating the test to make the English, math and reading sections each have fewer items. The length of time testing in English, math, reading, and science will all change – some will decrease, and others increase. In all cases, students will have more time per item to read source material, read and interpret the question, and make their answer choice.

In addition, there will be some structural changes. In English, the instructions in the past appeared at the top of the passage. The items themselves were just a list of answer choices. ACT will be adding “stems,” or the statement of the question with any instructions, above those answer choices to make the expectations clearer. In math, ACT will be reducing the number of answer choices from 5 to 4, which aligns better with other tests students may have taken. For more information, please see this video: <https://share.act.org/watch/8WLJCuDhKFTN19DvHKYY5T>

ACT does not share more details like the number of passages that appear. While we are shortening some of our passages, we will continue to have longer passages as well. Both passage types will have multiple questions.

The ACT test remains a linear assessment and will not be adaptive as we release the enhancements. The times provided for testing in each section are the same whether you take the test on paper or online, and therefore the changes in time per item are both on paper and online as well.

Bring Your Own Device (BYOD):

ACT is actively developing capabilities that allow examinees to bring their own devices on National testing. We are hoping to fully enable the support for this option in the 2025-2026 testing year for National testing.

Comparability:

The enhanced ACT will be launched in national online test administrations in spring 2025 and ongoing research is planned to document evidence evaluating interpretations and uses of ACT scores. As the research outcomes become available, ACT will be publishing research reports and holding meetings with stakeholders to share the outcomes. We will focus on describing what is changing, the rationale for the changes, and outcomes of the research studies focusing on technical characteristics of the updates including various aspects of validity (content, cognitive process, internal structure, concurrent, and predictive) and measurement properties such as reliability, score comparability, and timing. We will also provide information about perceptions of the enhanced ACT relative to the traditional ACT.

Composite & Superscore:

The ACT Composite score has been updated. Starting in April 2025 for all national tests administered online, and September 2025, for all others, the ACT Composite score will be the average of the section scores from English, mathematics, and reading. This Composite score calculation will apply to all National and International testing, and students who test through State and District contracts. Students can

still take all five sections offered on the ACT test, but they will have more flexibility to choose their own ACT test experience tailored to their education needs. Students who take the science section will receive their standalone science section score as well as a STEM score (science + math) just as students who take the writing section receive their standalone writing section score as well as an ELA score (English, reading, and writing).

The same transition will occur with Superscores. Superscores will be based on performance in English, math and reading. ACT will continue to provide both the highest Science score and the highest STEM score on reports for students who take science at least once. Superscores CAN be created by any ACT section test regardless of whether it was before or after the enhancement's rollout. For instance, if a student tests in February 2025, prior to the rollout, they could combine that with scores from the September 2025 administration for the highest possible Superscore.

Desmos:

We currently have the Desmos calculator for our school day testing, and we are working to integrate it into our Saturday online testing. It will not be available in April, but we are looking for integration in the 2025-2026 school year. Of course, examinees are still encouraged to bring and use an approved calculator they are familiar with, whether testing online or on paper.

Devices:

ACT has a specific list of approved devices for national testing and for state and district testing. These lists are NOT the same. iPads can be used for online school day testing, but they are not currently supported for national online administrations. For students using iPads in school day testing, an external keyboard and mouse are recommended but not required.

Field Test:

ACT will be moving to an embedded field-testing model as a part of these enhancements. Field test items are regular, high-quality items that ACT is looking to put onto a future test to count as part of a student's score. In the past, ACT used the 5th test in the national market only to test out items and ensure that students are able to understand and answer those questions. Field testing is a critical part of ALL high-stakes testing, as it allows ACT to ensure that the questions perform as expected and perform well in all demographic subgroups. Field test items do not count towards a student's score. Students will NOT know which items are field test items on test day – the items will be integrated into the operational items and will NOT be located in the same spots each time.

For passage-based subjects, one of the passages and the associated items will be field test, which leads to a higher percentage of field test items in those subjects.

Higher Ed:

The enhancements to the ACT were made thoughtfully and with great care. This has included extensive engagement and consultation (dating back more than 2 years) with ACT's Higher Education Senior Leadership Council – an advisory body composed of chief enrollment leaders reflecting wide diversity of institution type, size, selectivity, and region, and includes Big10 representation (University of Iowa). The first public announcement coincided with the July 15, 2024 opening of the ACT Enrollment Management Summit in Chicago. This was followed by emails from ACT and Encoura to higher ed contacts and supported by an extensive media campaign including the launch of online assets (including act.org/actenhancements, etc.). Additional HED-focused resources were released at the NACAC conference in Los Angeles (September 25-28, 2024). A communication plan has been developed and will include periodic releases of research that ensures full transparency and visibility into the technical aspects of the enhancements. There is an enterprise-level commitment to engage further with higher education throughout the next year, recognizing that Higher Ed is a valued partner and shares our commitment to serve and support students through this transition.

Modular:

At this time, the ACT will remain a battery of tests. For National test-takers, students will sit for all sections for which they have registered. For ACT contracts, ACT will be allowing some flexibility, where if allowed by the contract, a longer break can be inserted after English, math and reading (either directly after reading, or after the science test). ACT is continuing to evaluate any additional modularity prior to deciding on whether to add this as a future enhancement.

Online:

Online testing has been available on the national test days since December of 2023, and will continue as ACT works with our testing centers to grow our network and increase the number of seats available for those wanting to take the test online.

Options/Choices for Students:

ACT will continue to provide options for students, and the new science option is the next step in that process. Science will become like writing, where students can choose whether or not to register for this. Science and writing are NOT bundled – a student can choose one of 4 options – English, math and reading; English, math,

reading and science; English, math, reading and writing; or English, math, reading, science, and writing.

On a national test day, students will enter the room based on their assessment mode – paper or online. All students will take the English, math and reading. ACT is working on the schedule to determine when we will have the longer break. Once those subjects are done, any student taking one or both of the optional sections will stay, and students not taking them will be dismissed. ACT is working out how to offer those sections simultaneously, so students are not waiting to take writing if they are not taking science – but we plan to maintain the ordering we have currently, so anyone taking science will be taking it first. Once the first 40-minute block for optional assessments is over, students who have completed their testing for the day will be dismissed, and only writing would be administered in the second block, for those who choose to take all 5 subject tests. Students CANNOT make test date changes for the optional assessments only – they MUST take all subjects they are registered for together.

For school day testing, there is an added level of flexibility for those whose contracts allow it. In this case, students MUST take English, math, and reading together in one block. But to allow for better ability to provide lunches etc., there can be ONE longer break either after reading before the science test, or after science before the writing test. For those administering paper tests, this extended break can be through the following day. For those administering the assessment online, they have the entire testing window to schedule their second session. If their choice is to break following reading, both science and writing should be taken together in the second testing administration.

Paper:

ACT has stressed its commitment to allowing students to have choice in their testing journey. That includes maintaining the Paper option. For April, June, and July of 2025, if a student chooses to take the assessment on paper, they will be taking the current version, without the enhancements.

ACT does not plan to increase the number of paper dates during our established school day windows. If your school is experiencing a hardship with paper testing, please reach out to your ACT contact or customer care for help.

Platform:

Due to different needs in the state and district market compared to the national test day market and the international market, at this time ACT does not have plans to move to a single platform. If that changes in the future, we will make all

stakeholders aware and provide the necessary training. The new practice tests are on the national test day platform, so that students are able to see the tools and format they will see on test day.

Practice:

As noted during the webinar, ACT has posted out a practice test in the online format for those preparing for April, June, or July of 2025 testing. The link to that page is:

<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-changes/online-testing/sample-questions.html>

The full-length practice tests are toward the bottom of that page and come in both timed and untimed formats. Students can use these to experience the structural changes we have been talking about, and to see how ACT has adjusted the number of items and the length of individual items. ACT will be releasing answer sheets in the new year to go along with these tests. Students can take these practice tests as many times as they would like.

ACT will continue to develop additional practice materials, including those used for students opting to do paper testing (a new Preparing for the ACT guide), and working with our partners to update materials for purchase as quickly as possible. For those wanting more information about the enhancements, we do post materials, resources, and Frequently Asked Questions on our website. The link to that page is:

<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-changes/enhancements/k12.html>

PreACT:

Our content teams are currently working on proposals for new PreACT blueprints that will align with the Enhanced ACT. We are hoping to roll out the new blueprints in Spring 2026 (along with the change to the English+Math+Reading Composite score at that time) for PreACT 9 Secure and PreACT Secure when the S&D ACT changes roll out. The PreACT 8/9 and PreACT changes will happen starting in Fall 2026.

Science, for now, is staying part of the PreACT test battery for all customers. If they wish to make it "optional" to mimic what they are offering for the ACT, they just will not complete the science section. It will not affect scores since Composite will be EMR only. They just will not get a Science or STEM score, and it will show up as " - - " on their score reports.

When deciding between PreACT and PreACT Secure, there are certain factors to keep in mind. Often the reason schools choose to take the PreACT Secure is to be used for course placement. Additionally, since it is a high-stakes assessment, some colleges recognize it as an option for admissions. However, with PreACT Secure assessments, schools do not get the virtual test booklets back to review the itemized response like with the PreACT.

Price:

Final pricing for the April, June and July test administrations was set. There was a price differential for students who decided not to take the Science test, with students who choose all 4 subjects paying the same whether they are testing on paper or online. Pricing for next year will be released at the time of registration opening in the summer of 2025. ACT remains committed to its fee waiver program, which will continue to apply.

For school day contracts, any discussion about price would begin with the appropriate account executive/ACT contact.

Remote Proctoring:

ACT has been exploring the use of remote proctoring, but it is not currently available. If ACT decides to allow remote proctoring in the future, we will take care to inform stakeholders so they are able to make that decision.

Reporting Category Distribution:

ACT is making small changes to the blueprint including shifting the percentage of items in the various reporting categories. ACT will be publishing the new blueprint on our website as soon as we can. It is important to note that while we did change the percentage on each reporting category, we have neither eliminated nor added reporting categories to the blueprint at this time.

Resources:

ACT has a variety of resources available. The best source for these resources is the ACT website. The link to the K-12 ACT Enhancements page is:

<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-changes/enhancements/k12.html>

Science:

ACT is a strong believer in STEM education, and we will continue to be the only college admissions test to have a science section. We are also making changes to the

science section to keep up with the pace of discovery from the scientific community. We also recognize that for certain students, taking the science section may not be the strongest way for them to demonstrate what they know and are able to do. ACT wants to provide a level of choice and flexibility so that students and parents have some say in their testing journey.

Score Reporting:

ACT will continue to provide students with as much information as possible. We send official reports of ALL subject scores a student receives, as well as STEM and ELA scores if they have taken the requisite subjects. Scores will continue to be reported as a whole – students will report the test scores for all subjects they have taken on a particular test administration. For students who opt not to take science, they (and colleges) will see “-/-” on their reports, and not a “1”. This is consistent with how we report writing today.

ACT is working with higher education to provide them easy to understand data files that will show whether a reported Composite score is based on performance on English, math, reading and science or English, math and reading.

Score reports will NOT contain any information on student performance on embedded field test items.

State & District Testing:

ACT values our state and district clients and wants to extend additional flexibility in the school day testing market as well. ACT account executives stand ready to answer questions about the enhancements, and what that flexibility will mean.

The choice of what subjects are administered starts will continue to be at the contract level. State and district clients will decide whether they want to continue to have science administered, just as writing is today. So, in the future, state and district will continue administering English, math, and reading, but will decide whether to include science and/or writing (science and writing are NOT bundled – either one can be selected by itself).

For the school day flexibility, ACT will allow (should the contract decide that this policy is acceptable), testing over 2 school days. In essence, this formalizes an extended break accommodation that ACT already offers and provides that flexibility to all our state and district customers. If this flexibility is offered, schools would schedule English, math, and reading testing together, as it has been. The extended break could be after the reading assessment, or after the science assessment, at the school’s discretion, but testing must be completed in 2 sessions. For paper test

takers, the second session must be the same day (later in the afternoon) or the following day. Paper materials will continue to be picked up on Thursday. For online test takers, the school has the entire test window for the second session.

Timeline:

There is a staggered timeline for these changes to take effect. In April of 2025, the national online administration begins its transition – and will continue thereafter – to the enhanced blueprint. This also means that for ALL students taking the test online in April, June and July of 2025, their Composite score will be based on their performance in English, math and reading. In September 2025, the enhancements come to the paper national administration, as well as the international administration. This is also the time that ACT will begin calculating ALL scores based on performance on English, math and reading. Any test taken from September 2025 on regardless of national, international, or school day will have the Composite score based on performance in English, math and reading only. For our school day testers, the enhancement blueprint, and science optionality based on contract will begin during the Spring 2026 testing windows. There will NOT be any changes in the upcoming February national assessment, nor in the Spring 2025 school day testing.