

ACT Reading

Strategy 1: Understand Your High Level Weakness: Time Management, Passage Strategy, or Vocabulary

Every student has different flaws in ACT Reading. Some people don't have good strategies for tackling the passage questions. Others don't read quickly enough and struggle to get through all the questions.

Here's how you can figure out which one applies more to you:

- Find an official ACT practice test, and take only the Reading section. We have the [complete list of free practice tests here](#).
- For that section, use a timer for 60 minutes. Treat it like a real test.
- If time runs out and you're not done yet, keep working for as long as you need. But starting now, for every new answer or answer that you change, mark it with a special note as "Extra Time."
- Grade your test using the answer key and score chart, but we want two scores: 1) **The Realistic score** you got under normal timing conditions, 2) **The Extra Time score**. This is why you marked the questions you answered or changed during Extra Time.

Strategy 2: Learn to Eliminate 3 Wrong Answers

This strategy was by far the most effective for raising a Reading score.

Here's the other way to see it: **Out of the 4 answer choices, 3 of them have something that is totally wrong about them.** Only 1 answer is 100% correct, which means the other 3 are 100% wrong.

Wrong Answer 1: Too Specific→ Think to yourself – can this answer choice really describe the entire passage? Can it basically function as the title of this passage? You'll find that **it's just way too specific** to convey the point of the overall passage.

Wrong Answer 2: Too Broad

To give a ludicrous example, if you talked to your friend about losing your cell phone, and he said your main point was about the universe. Yes, you were talking about the universe (since we all live in this universe), but you were talking about only a tiny, tiny fraction of it. **This is way too broad.**

Wrong Answer 3: Reversed Relationship

Wrong Answer 4: Unrelated Concept

Strategy 3: Predict the Answer Before Reading the Answer Choices

As we've discussed already, the ACT is designed to goad you into making mistakes by putting really similar answer choices next to each other. In Strategy 2, we covered the strategy of ruthless, unforgiving elimination of answer choices. **Before reading the answer choices, come up with your own answer to the question.**

The key here is that the passage **must support your answer choice**. Every correct answer on ACT passages needs to be justified by the passage - otherwise the answer would be ambiguous, which would cause problems of cancelling questions referred to earlier.

Strategy 4: Understand Every Single Mistake You Make

On the path to perfection, you need to make sure every single one of your weak points is covered. Even just two mistakes will knock you down from a 36.

The first step is simply to do a ton of practice

The second step - and the more important part - is to be ruthless about understanding your mistakes.

Every mistake you make on a test happens for a reason. **If you don't understand exactly why you missed that question, you will make that mistake over and over again.**

Here's what you need to do:

- on every practice test or question set that you take, mark every question that you're even 20% unsure about
- when you grade your test or quiz, review every single question that you marked, and every incorrect question. This way even if you guessed a question correctly, you'll make sure to review it.
- in a notebook, write down the gist of the question, why you missed it, and what you'll do to avoid that mistake in the future. Have separate sections by question type (vocab questions, big picture questions, inference questions, etc.)

It's not enough to just think about it and move on. It's not enough to just read the answer explanation. You have to think hard about why you specifically failed on this question.