

## Preparing for the ACT – Teacher Tips

The ACT is a nationally-recognized benchmark for college and career readiness and assesses students’ cumulative knowledge and skills based on standards taught from elementary to high school. The statewide school testing dates for Tennessee are **March 21, April 19, or May 3, 2017**. In order for students to do their best, it is important that they know what to expect on the ACT and how to take the test. Below are a set of tips to help you prepare students to do their best.

The following table demonstrates the test structure of the ACT.

English	Mathematics	Reading	Science
75 questions	60 questions	40 questions	40 questions
45 minutes	60 minutes	35 minutes	35 minutes

- 1. Begin with the why.** Regardless of whether students are sure of what they will do after high school, the ACT is a useful measure for planning what’s next. Though commonly used by postsecondary institutions as a criterion for admission, scholarship eligibility, and/or course placement, the ACT is not just for students who plan to pursue higher education. The skills that students need to succeed on the ACT – such as core academic skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving – overlap significantly with career-readiness skills. In fact, the ACT score report includes a projected level of achievement toward the National Career Readiness Certificate, which is recognized by employers during the hiring process. You can view a sample student score report [here](#).
- 2. Demonstrate a growth mindset.** Because the ACT is a predictable, standardized test, students can increase their scores through strong familiarity with the structure, timing, and format of the test. Opportunities to practice ACT questions before the official test will help students know exactly what to expect on the exam day.
- 3. Perfect practice makes perfect.** When your students practice, you should try to replicate exactly what taking the test will be like on their test day. Even if you are only practicing five questions in one subject area, control the environment to ensure that students are learning to pace themselves for an actual test. For instance, students have about 1 minute or less per problem on each section of the ACT.
- 4. Communicate and celebrate.** Just as preparation for the ACT must start well before the test date or the junior year, communicating the purpose and potential impact of the test should occur regularly so that students become informed and comfortable.
- 5. Make the connection.** Many of the tested standards on the ACT are based on concepts and skills that students build upon from the second to ninth grades. In order to make the connections more visible, we have created the [ACT Connections](#) document to help Tennessee educators connect the Tennessee Academic Standards to the ACT subject tests.