



# ACE THE ACT (AND SAT)

BY SAVANNA PRUITT



We've all seen it happen: A student walks into a room with sweaty palms, wide eyes, and a facial expression that suggests a sense of impending doom. They know that they aren't ready for the test, you know that they aren't ready for the test, and the whole universe probably knows by this point that they are not ready for the test! We've got good news: You never have to be that kid. All it takes is a little test preparation. Don't know where to start? We've got you covered:

**BUILD YOUR VOCABULARY.** Consider this: If you don't understand a word in the question, that question becomes pretty much unanswerable. The moral of the story? Build your vocabulary! Try taking a practice test and writing down every word you don't know from that test. Afterwards, look up the words and commit them to memory. Ronnie E. Demler, an SAT coach, reminds students that the same words appear over and over on multiple tests, so it's imperative that you learn them.

## EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT STRATEGIES.

No two people think the same way. Therefore it makes perfect sense that no two people test in the exact same way, so try out different strategies. One way to figure out your testing strategy is to take practice tests and find patterns in your weaknesses. Try focusing on areas where you struggle, but at the same time, don't get too comfortable with the concepts you know you are good at.

**USE THE PROCESS OF ELIMINATION.** If you can eliminate one or two answers, the right answer may become more obvious and you'll have a much higher chance of answering correctly. Keep in mind that it is better to guess on a question than leave it blank, and it may help to look for wrong answers instead of right answers.

**TAKE PRACTICE TESTS.** Using a test prep book like the Princeton Review can really help you to familiarize yourself with the testing material. These books often include reviews as well as practice tests, which can be a huge help when preparing to take a standardized test.

TIP

### CHECK OUT THESE GREAT VOCAB APPS:

- ACT Up for iOS
- SAT Vocabulary for Android



TIP

While taking a practice test, make sure to take advantage of white space on the page and show your scratch work. When you go back over the test, looking at your scratch work can help you understand why you chose the answers you chose.

**MASTER THE TESTING FORMAT.** Taking practice tests will not only help you identify your strengths and weaknesses; it will also help you know the format of the test inside and out. Mariah Clark, a recent LAMP graduate who was able to increase her ACT score by ten points, emphasizes: “As soon as you understand the structure of the test, you can automatically increase your score.”

**JOIN A TEST PREP CLASS.** While enrolling in a class for test prep might be costly, it can pay for itself in the long run. As your ACT or SAT score rises, more scholarship money becomes available to you. Just a one point score increase on the ACT could mean the difference between a partial and a full scholarship to the school of your dreams. So is the initial investment of enrolling in a class worth it? We think so!

**HELP, I'M STUCK!** If it comes time for “The Real Deal” and you get stuck on a question, keep these tips in mind:

- **Work the questions out of order.** You do not have to answer the questions in consecutive order; answer the ones you feel confident about first, and then move on to the more difficult ones.
- **Don't spend too much time on one question.** You've probably heard this since elementary school, but it's still true today. Pace yourself.
- **Use the process of elimination.** We can't stress this enough! If you have absolutely no idea how to answer a question, the only chance you have of getting right is by making an educated guess, so eliminate those answers you know to be wrong first.

## Advice from a fellow student:

Grant Prater, recent LAMP graduate and holder of perfect ACT and SAT scores, offers advice from his experience for students who are taking standardized tests:

On using the process of elimination: “The answers are right in front of you, but they must be reasoned carefully, and not leapt wildly into, or mistakes will be made.”

On using test prep books: “I believe books such as these are helpful, but only for giving tips on how to optimize taking the test, not as a sole resource for learning the material. Its purpose is to review and consolidate, not teach.”

Still get those sweaty palms and feelings of impending doom when it's time to test? Keep this in mind:

“Obviously, though there's a fair amount of emphasis put on college entrance exams during high school, they ultimately have little bearing on the final outcome. No one's future spouse or employer has a minimum ACT score for admittance.” ✨



# A



# B



## TIP

### THINGS TO BRING / GO-BAG:

- Admission Ticket (paper copy)
- Photo ID
- Two #2 Pencils (not mechanical!)
- Small Handheld Pencil Sharpener
- Eraser
- APPROVED Calculator and Extra Batteries
- Watch (no sounds allowed)
- Water and Snack for Break

