

JUST FOR JUNIORS

FEBRUARY

UPCOMING COLLEGE and MILITARY REPRESENTATIVE VISITS

*** Please sign up in the Guidance Office so we know how many students to expect for each visit! If no one signs up, the visit is cancelled!*

February 6 th	NCKTC, Beloit
February 14 th	Allen Community College
February 21 st	Wichita State University
March 1 st	Flint Hills Technical College
March 1 st	Fort Scott Technical College

*Remember, only twenty minutes are allotted for representative visits!
Please report to the Guidance Office immediately at the beginning of home room!*

College Entrance Exams:

ACT: test of choice in the mid-west

SAT: test of choice on the East Coast and the West Coast and colleges with highly selective admissions policies

Register online at www.actstudent.org (ACT) or www.collegeboard.com (SAT). You will have to pay by credit card if registering online. Registering online is the preferred method for both tests.

ACT TESTING DATES (BHS will host all testing dates except the July one!)

TEST DATE	DEADLINE	LATE DEADLINE
April 13, 2019	March 8, 2019	March 25, 2019
June 8, 2019	May 3, 2019	May 20, 2019
July 13, 2019	June 14, 2019	June 24, 2019

BHS will offer all tests dates, except for July!

ACT without writing — \$55.50

ACT with writing—\$67.00

Register online at www.actstudent.org.

BHS School Code: 170-430

BHS Testing Center Code: 221280

See Mrs. Bolen if you think you might qualify for a fee waiver or extended time testing!

You will receive testing tips as we get closer to the first test administration in September. The best way to prepare is to **study, study, study**, and **read, read, read!** Keep studying in your English, math, science, and social studies courses, but don't neglect the others! Do some prep work before taking the test. Doing *something* is better than doing nothing at all!

TEST PREP SITES:

www.act.org/academy

www.actstudent.org

www.collegeboard.com

www.testprepreview.com

www.number2.com

<http://www.studyguidezone.com/satstest.htm>

www.testanxietytips.com

www.free-test-online.com

<http://www.sparknotes.com/testprep/>

POTENTIAL COLLEGE ATHLETES:

NCAA: register with NCAA at www.eligibilitycenter.org. Your ACT score must come directly from ACT even though it is part of your high school transcript. Please use code **9999** when you register to take the ACT.

NAIA: register with NAIA at www.playnaia.org. Your ACT score must come directly from ACT even though it is part of your high school transcript. Please use code **9876** when you register to take the ACT.

Preparing for the ACT, a booklet that contains a full-length ACT test along with answer sheet and test-taking strategies is available for download at www.act.org/theact/testprep. It is available in the BHS Guidance Office as well!

Requesting a Copy of Your ACT Test Questions and Answers

If you order and pay for a **Test Information Release (TIR)** form and test at a national test center on a national test date that offers this service, you will receive a list of your answers, a copy of the multiple-choice test questions used to determine your score, the answer key, and scoring instructions. (If you took the Writing Test, you will also receive a copy of the writing prompt, the scoring rubric, and the scores assigned to your essay by two readers.) Information about ordering a photocopy of your answer document (including your essay if you took the Writing Test) for an additional fee will be included with your materials. **This service is available for the December, April, and June test dates!** The TIR form is available at <http://www.actstudent.org/scores/release.html>.

ACT PREP AT BHS for the FEBRUARY 9th ACT

Thursday, English prep in Mrs. Parker’s room, 4 – 6 pm

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY ACT WORKSHOPS

WHEN: Saturday, March 2nd - on the KSU- Olathe campus

Friday, May 31st - on the KSU-Olathe campus

Saturday, June 1st - on the KSU – Manhattan campus

Friday, June 28th – on the KSU-Olathe campus

COST: \$50 per student and \$15 per parent or guest (There is a special program for parents to attend!)

WHY: designed for first-time test-takers or for those who want to improve their scores. This workshop will give you all you need to know about doing your best on the test. You’ll participate in a practice test that shows what to expect, hear the instructions exactly the way you’ll hear them in the real exam, work to time limits, and learn when to speed on to the next test question. You will also learn relaxation techniques so you don’t clam up on test day.

Register online at www.k-state.edu/admissions/act. Registration closes 72 business hours before the event or when it fills to capacity; whichever comes first!

WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY ACT WORKSHOPS

WHEN: March 9th and May 4th (7:45 am – noon)

COST: \$32.00

Register online at <http://www.registerblast.com/WSU/Home/Tab/72#ACT>.

WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY ACT MATH WORKSHOP

WHEN: February 16th, 8:45 am - noon

COST: \$25.00

Register online at <http://www.registerblast.com/WSU/Home/Tab/72#ACT>.

ENROLLMENT for 2019-20

Mrs. Bolen met with juniors and distributed enrollment information and forms January 28th. **All forms are due back to the Guidance Office by FEBRUARY 8th!** Make sure they have student and parent signatures! Parents, if you have questions don't hesitate to contact me, or you can catch me at conferences February 4th and 6th.

BEAUTY/COSMETOLOGY SCHOOLS

Are you interested in beauty/cosmetology schools? Here is a link to help you search for information regarding them: <http://www.beautyschoolsdirectory.com/>.

ONLINE SCHOOLS

Are you considering attending an online college? Check out <http://onlinecolleges.net/kansas> to learn about the logistics of earning an online degree. This is a very good web site that contains a wealth of information, such as the following:

- *answers to the most common student questions about scholarships, accreditation and the prevalence of online education in Kansas
- *a curated list of the best scholarships available to Kansas students, both distance learners and those interested in a traditional campus education
- *a detailed description of every accredited online college in Kansas

ALLEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE COURSE TRANSFER LIST

If you plan to attend one of the state universities in Kansas or Washburn University, check out the following link to see how ACC courses transfer to one of these universities!

http://www.allencc.edu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=296&catid=49&Itemid=70

2019 KANSAS FUTURE TEACHER ACADEMY

WHEN: June 9-13, 2019

WHERE: Emporia State University

WHY: to learn more about the teaching profession

For the application and more information, visit www.emporia.edu/jones/kfta/application.html or pick it up in the Guidance Office.

DEADLINE to apply: must be postmarked by APRIL 19, 2019

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI – KANSAS CITY CAMPUS SNEAK PEEK JUNIOR DAYS

WHEN: March 16th, April 6th

REGISTRATION: register online at <https://www.umkc.edu/welcome/>

Check out www.sfa.umkc.edu to learn more about their scholarships and other opportunities.

BARTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE JUNIOR DAY

WHEN: February 13, 2019

WHY: find out what their classes are like, get a free t-shirt, be entered in a drawing for scholarship and other Barton goodies, and eat a free lunch!

REGISTER online at <http://bartonccc.edu/junior-day>.

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY EVENTS

ALL-UNIVERSITY OPEN HOUSE: April 6th, register at www.k-state.edu/openhouse

JUNIOR DAYS: March 25th, April 1st, 8th, 29 and May 3rd; register at www.k-state.edu/admissions/juniors

APPLY TO KSU: any time after June 1st! www.k-state.edu/admissions/apply

WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY VISIT EVENTS

Major Exploration Day: February 22nd

Black and Yellow Days: February 18th and April 5th

Shocker Saturdays: February 16th, March 16th, March 23rd, April 13th

Register online at www.wichita.edu/visit; click on undergraduate visit events

ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE WEEKEND

WHEN: March 7-9, 2019

Gain a first-hand look at what college life is like at ORU.

Check it out at www.collegeweekend.oru.edu

NEOSHO COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE PANTHER PREVIEW DAY

WHEN: February 6th on Chanute campus and February 20th on Ottawa campus

REGISTER online at <http://www.neosho.edu/theSHO>

INTERESTED IN MAJORING IN THEATRE?

The Educational Theatre Association has an online directory which provides a wide range of information about each participating college theatre program, including admission requirements, application deadlines, audition schedules, availability of merit scholarships, and complete contact information, including direct website links.

Dramatics Magazine can be found at <http://collegedirectory.schooltheatre.org>.

GRAMMY CAMP

WHEN: July 23-27, 2019 in Los Angeles, CA

WHO: students interested in *Audio Engineering, Electronic Music Production, Songwriting, Vocal Performance, Music Journalism, Video Production, Music Business, or Instrumental Performance*

Details are available at <http://www.grammyintheschools.com/programs/grammy-camp>

DEADLINE TO APPLY: MARCH 31, 2019

AMERICAN LEGION BOYS STATE

Eligibility: must be a junior male who ranks in the upper half of the class, is a self-starter, is involved in extracurricular activities in school and community, and who wants to learn leadership skills for the future

WHEN: June 2 – 7, 2019

WHERE: Kansas State University

APPLICATION PROCESS: Mrs. Bolen notified eligible junior males. Please apply online at www.kansasboysstate.org/apply. Once you have applied and your information has been reviewed, you will receive an email with a two-sided application that needs completed, signed, and returned.

COST: \$325; you are responsible for \$50 and our local American Legion works hard to get the rest of your fee. There is a possibility that you might have to come up with the rest, but in the past, the American Legion has always come through!

DEADLINE: MARCH 7th!!! Turn in your application and check for \$50 to the Guidance Office and Mrs. Bolen will take it to the American Legion for you!

PSU COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY OPEN HOUSE

WHEN: Friday, March 1st, 9 am – 1 pm

WHY: you will get to see lab demonstrations and tour the facility

WHO: students interested in Automotive Technology, Construction, Engineering Technology, Graphics and Imaging Technologies, and Technology and Workforce Learning

If interested, <https://www.pittstate.edu/technology/events/college-of-technology-open-house.html>

MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY FUTURE LIONS DAY

WHEN: February 15, 2019, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

LOCATION: Billingsly Student Center – 3rd Floor

RSVP: <https://mssu.edu/discoverydays>

Visit Colleges . . . Without Ever Leaving Home

Surf the Internet for Online Campus Tours

Although the weather outside may be frightful, there are plenty of fruitful ways to pass the time indoors. During the winter months, spend some time online exploring colleges and narrowing down your search.

Many universities realize that on-site campus visits can be financially and logistically difficult. However, by sponsoring virtual tours of their campuses, colleges provide an economical means for students to learn more about academics, sports, and student life. It's a win-win for both institutions and potential students.

In addition to virtual tours, hundreds of colleges take advantage of technology to host online college fairs. The web-based fairs allow students to learn more about particular colleges and help colleges learn more about prospective students.

At least one university is offering the ultimate step in technological convenience, a virtual interview. Wake Forest University in North Carolina now uses webcam admission interviews. With the help of three tools—a web camera, a microphone and an internet connection—students can be interviewed from the comfort of their own home. The interview is conducted like any other "in-person" one. But there is no plane fare, motel fee, or wear and tear on the family car.

FAFSA4CASTER

Looking ahead to financial aid for college?? Check out www.fafsa.ed.gov and click on the FAFSA4CASTER link that is toward the bottom. You can fill in your information and the results will give you a glimpse of what federal grants, loans, etc you might qualify for when you complete the actual FAFSA for federal student aid.

WHAT IS TESTED ON THE ACT?

Test 1 - English (45 minutes to answer 75 questions)

- 13% of the questions test your knowledge of punctuation
- 16% of the questions test your knowledge of grammar and usage
- 24% of the questions deal with sentence structure
- 16% of the questions test your knowledge of writing strategy (audience, purpose, revisions, relevance)
- 15% of the questions test your knowledge of writing organization (organize ideas, transitions, closing)
- 16% of the questions test your knowledge over writing style (use of words, imagery, tone, wordiness)

Test 2 - Mathematics (60 minutes to answer 60 questions)

- 24 pre-algebra/elementary algebra questions
- 18 intermediate algebra/coordinate geometry questions
- 18 plane geometry/trigonometry questions

Break - typically 10-15 minutes

Test 3 - Reading (35 minutes to answer 40 questions)

- 25% of the questions are reading selections from Social Science
- 25% of the questions are reading selections from Natural Science
- 25% of the questions are reading selections from Prose Fiction
- 25% of the questions are reading selections from Humanities

Test 4 - Science (35 minutes to answer 40 questions)

- 38% of the questions are Data Representation
- 45% of the questions are Research Summaries
- 17% of the questions are Conflicting Viewpoints

Short break - 5 minutes stand up and stretch break for those taking the writing test

Writing Test - (40 minutes to hand write an essay on the assigned topic)

GENERAL ACT TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

Pace yourself. There is enough time for most test-takers to complete each section. It is important to pace yourself so you will not spend too much time on any one passage on the English, Science, and Reading tests.

Read the directions for each test carefully. The English, Science, and Reading tests ask for the “best” answer. Do not respond as soon as you identify a correct answer. Read and consider all of the answer choices and choose the answer that *best* responds to the question. The Math test asks for the “correct” answer.

Read each question carefully. It is important that you understand what each question asks. Some questions will require you to go through several steps to find the correct or best answer, while others can be answered more quickly.

Answer the easy questions first. The best strategy is to answer the easy questions first and skip the more difficult ones. After answering all the easy questions, go back and answer the more difficult questions.

Use logic in more difficult questions. When you return to the more difficult questions, try to use logic to eliminate incorrect answers to a question. Compare the answer choices to each other and note how they differ. Eliminate as many incorrect answers as you can, then make an educated guess from the remaining answers.

Answer every question. Your score on the tests will be based on the number of questions that you answer correctly; **there is no penalty for guessing.** You should answer every question within the time allowed for each test, even if you have to guess. It is to your advantage to answer every question!

Review your work. If there is time left after you have answered every question on a test, go back and check your work on that test. Check to be sure you marked only one answer for each question. You can not go back to previously completed tests.

Do not fill in ovals after time is called. Once time for a particular test has been called, you can not fill in ovals on your answer sheet for a previous test, even with the test booklet closed. Doing so will cause your answer sheet to be voided and you will be dismissed from testing.

Be precise in marking your answer. Be sure that you fill in the correct ovals on your answer document. Check to be sure that the number of the line of ovals on your answer document is the same as the number of the question you are answering and that you mark only one response for each question.

Erase completely. If you want to change a multiple-choice answer, be sure to use a soft eraser that will not leave smudges and erase the unintended mark completely. Do not cross out answers or use correction fluid or tape; you must erase. Stray marks on your answer sheet could affect your score!

Familiarize yourself with the content of the ACT tests. Use the practice booklet or the available web sites to practice with the types of questions you will see on the ACT.

Refresh your knowledge and skills in the content areas. Review those content areas you have studied but do not have freshly in your mind. Spend your time refreshing your knowledge and skills in the content areas that make up large portions of the test.

Dress comfortably. To conserve energy, many test centers may be considerably warmer or cooler on weekends than during the week. Please dress in such a way that you will be comfortable in a variety of temperatures.

Make sure your cell phone and all other “noises” are turned off. During testing, if your phone rings or an alarm goes off, such as a watch alarm, you will be dismissed from testing and your test will be voided. Leave those items at home or in your car!

Eat Your Way to a Higher SAT or ACT Score

(taken from the November/December 2006 issue of *The Next Step Magazine*)

Preparing for the college admission tests while eating potato chips and drinking cola? You may not be as ready for the SAT or ACT as you think. We talked to dieticians about an important part of test preparation that often gets ignored: food.

What foods enhance brain function? “For optimal brain function, you can’t rely on a single food or even a handful of ‘super foods’ for a few days before a test,” says registered dietician Dalia Perelman from the Camino Medical Center in Mountain View, California.

“Foods that contain less-processed forms of carbohydrates, such as whole grains, beans, whole fruits (not juice), and starchy vegetables, will provide a steady source of energy to the brain,” she says. “When the sources of carbohydrates in the diets are sugars (as in cookies or cakes made with white flour), the levels of sugar in the blood are less stable, thus affecting brain function.”

“Adolescents need foods from all food groups,” adds Dr. Karen Cullen, associate professor of pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. “To find out about healthful food and beverage choices, students can check out www.mypyramid.gov.”

Don’t skip breakfast. “There’s a lot of research on the overall impact that breakfast has on academic achievement,” says Mary Angela Miller, registered dietician at Ohio State University in Columbus. “You don’t want to work on old energy storages from the day before. It is important to have a fresh supply of carbohydrates each day.”

Perleman concurs, “If you don’t refuel your body in the morning, you have to draw fuel from your own energy stores. When using reserves, your body tries to save as much energy as possible, and all nonessential functions will not receive much fuel. Creative thinking, memory, attention span, all suffer.”

“The recommended breakfast should include fruit, fiber, and protein,” says Miller. “Use fresh fruit, preferably, or canned fruit. Cereal with high fiber, fruit and milk is a great way to renew energy supplies for the morning.” If you are not a breakfast eater, try to build up your “breakfast endurance” before test day.

Pack those quick, easy snacks. The SAT and ACT take 4 hours, not counting the waiting time before the test. Being at the test site for five hours or more is not uncommon. That’s a long time to go without nutrition. When taking the ACT, students are given a ten minute break between tests 2 and 3 and another short 5-minute break before the writing test if they are taking it.

What is an energizing snack that can be eaten quickly? “The combination of a high protein, low carbohydrate, and high tyrosine food is likely to jumpstart the brain. Milk and yogurt have this combination, so taking a carton of ultra pasteurized milk, which does not need to be refrigerated, or a light yogurt in a small cooler, would be ideal for a snack,” advises Perelman.

Also consider soy nuts or other nuts; fruit; vegetables such as carrots, cucumbers, peppers or cherry tomatoes; bananas and raisins; low-fat granola bars; cheese and peanut butter crackers; or a peanut butter sandwich and bottled water.

“Some students who feel they may need a boost may benefit from popular energy drinks or sports drinks,” adds Miller. “I would recommend, if a student opts for this route, to drink a beverage they have tried before and know they enjoy and tolerate well. A caffeine jolt could pose problems for the uninitiated.”

Avoid the (yummy) fried stuff. “Research suggests that eating foods with trans fats, which includes pastries, candies, and all fried foods, will deteriorate cognitive function,” Perleman says. Eating a doughnut in the morning before the test may give you some quick energy, but it definitely will not help you think clearly.

SCORING THE ACT

You earn a composite score, which is the average of the scaled scores earned on the four individual tests. A perfect ACT score would be a 36. The national average for the past several years has been a 21. If you plan to attend one of the state universities in Kansas, there are three ways to be admitted, and earning a composite of 21 is one way to do so.

You earn a raw score of one point for each correct answer. The raw score is then converted to a scaled score which is printed on the score report that is sent to you and your college choices.

The higher composite score you can earn, the better. There are many incoming freshman scholarship opportunities for students with high ACT scores.

COLLEGE READINESS BENCHMARKS

ACT conducted a study in which they found they can predict the success of a typical first-time college student taking courses at a typical college or university. They were able to set benchmarks that indicate the relationship between ACT scores and success for college freshmen. Success is defined as having a 50% chance of earning a B in the following college courses:

COURSE	ACT ASSESSMENT TEST	BENCHMARK FOR SUCCESS
English Composition	English	18
College Algebra	Mathematics	22
Social Science	Reading	22
Biology	Science	23

Once you have taken the ACT, compare your scores to those on the chart to see how you compare to the benchmarks for success. Are you ready for college-level courses?

SIX EASY WAYS (STUDY LESS?!) TO ACE YOUR NEXT EXAM

By Eleanor Criswell, Ph.D

(The Next Step Magazine, November/December 2006 issue)

Do you take a lot of tests? Do you worry about your scores? When you study, do you feel that your brain is creeping along in slow motion? Do you cram for hours, yet still find it hard to remember the material? If so, then check out these six steps for smarter, calmer, more focused ways to study for tests.

Study less (but more frequently) You might think that one night of cramming saves you overall study time. But the stress and high speed of cramming interfere with learning, so it takes longer to learn by cramming than by a less stressful study method. Alternating short study sessions with down time produces more efficient learning than a big block of study time. Also, you are more likely to forget material you learn when cramming because you're just memorizing it. So if you cram for the midterm, you'll probably have to cram that much harder for the final.

Add in time for an occasional review. Reviewing your notes after class might feel like a waste of time, but it can save you study time in the long run. This is because you learn new material faster and more deeply if you can connect it to material you have already learned. It will stay with you longer because it actually means something to you; it isn't just crammed in.

Rephrase your worries. Worry about tests is usually caused by the "I'm afraid I'm not smart enough" fear or the

“I’m afraid of what my mom will say when she sees my report card” fear. It’s much better to be thinking positively. Try: “I’m plenty smart enough to get through high school,” or “Whatever scores I get will be a result of my preparation and a bit of luck with the questions,” and “If I get a lower score than what I want, I can deal with it.”

Put your energy into mental activity, not physical fidgeting. While studying and taking tests, keep your body relatively still. Stop your squirming. Worried test takers often fidget; confident, focused test takers are usually more still. If you fidget, use that as a sign to yourself that your mind is wandering. Get back on track with some stillness.

Take a calm mental walk through the test before you get there. Psychologists have said you can improve your test scores if your study conditions are similar to the testing conditions. One way to make that happen is to take a practice test!

Picture the test setting. Don’t just imagine the questions; imagine the whole test scene. You can’t possibly predict everything that will happen at the test, but you can probably predict much of it. Picture the room. Imagine the test administrator passing out the tests. Listen to the test booklets falling on each student’s desk. Practice telling yourself calm, positive things. Picture yourself taking the first look at the test. Imagine yourself being shocked at the first question because you don’t know the answer immediately, but then tell yourself that the answer might come to you as you read through the test. Imagine the good feeling when the test administrator picks up your test booklet and answer sheet, and you have done your best.

TEN DANGEROUS MISTAKES NOT TO MAKE ON THE ACT

By Air’n Monahan (www.thelazystudentsway.com)

MISTAKE #1: Thinking the questions go from easiest to hardest.

The questions are scattered in no particular order of difficulty. That means the hardest question on the test might be the FIRST question, or it might be the last. Or maybe somewhere in the middle. You just don't know. Now here's what's really important . . . EACH QUESTION IS WEIGHTED EQUALLY. If you get the correct answer on three hard questions but miss three easy ones, it's the same as if you'd gotten three easy ones right and three hard ones wrong. It doesn't matter. All that matters is getting as many CORRECT answers as possible.

MISTAKE #2: Not getting through the whole test.

Because each question is equal in terms of scoring, it's CRUCIAL that you get through the entire test. There may be a lot of easy questions near the end, which is a great opportunity to get lots of extra points. Plus, there is NO PENALTY for wrong answers. If you guess, you are not penalized. What that means is you should DEFINITELY fill out every oval on your test sheet! If you have to guess on several questions because you're out of time, it is recommended to check "B" or "C" on all the remaining bubbles. It sounds like "conspiracy theory", but there has been a lot of research about standardized testing and it seems the choices "B" and "C" have a disproportionate amount of correct answers. I don't know if I believe it either, but hey... what do you have to lose? Anyway, the real point here is you should aim to get through the ENTIRE TEST. The ACT is long... it's three hours and twenty-five minutes, if you count the Writing section. That's a LOT of time to be cramped up in a room answering obscure questions with a #2 pencil. BUT... You've got to "suck it up" and just do it. No need to whine about it. So, since each question is treated equal, and since there's no real way to know where all the easy or hard questions are, do everything within your powers to GET THROUGH THE WHOLE TEST.

MISTAKE #3: Using a "shotgun" approach.

One of my core strategies is to "reverse engineer" the way you naturally take tests. Here's what I mean... When you get to a question, you normally read the question, read the answer choices, eliminate the answer choices, and then pick the best option. Right? Well, because the ACT is a standardized test and is the "same" every time it's administered, the questions you see can be "predicted" in terms of their content.

For example, on the English test, questions break down into one of two categories: Usage and Mechanics and Rhetorical Skills. The usage and mechanics questions break down into three MORE categories: Punctuation, Basic Grammar and Usage, and Sentence Structure. Each "category" will have the same number of questions for it for every ACT... For instance, there will be ten punctuation questions on every ACT you take. No matter what. Knowing the "categories" in advance makes the test a HUNDRED times easier! Whereas most students prep for the ACT by studying huge 400-page books crammed with grammar rules and math formulas, I'm going to teach you how to prep for the test by KNOWING EXACTLY WHAT'S COMING.

I like to use the metaphor of a SHOTGUN compared to a RIFLE. If you approach each question the "normal" way, it's kind of like a shotgun. You're "shooting" your brain out there in a million different directions... with no clear path or target. How do you eliminate the answer choices? What specific step-by-step actions do you take? How do you choose the right option? What happens in your mind is CHAOS. The process is based on "feel", things that stick out, tidbits of stuff you remember in school, and so on. And it's this CHAOS that leads you to think about the annoying guy in the seat in front of you... Or the gum that's stuck to the bottom of your chair... or what you and your friends will be doing later that night.

The good news is, there's a SOLUTION to all of this. What you need is a CLEAR, STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS to use for every single question you encounter. This is your "rifle". Instead of reading the question, reading the choices, eliminating the choices, and choosing an answer... You will begin with the PROCESS, read the question, and follow the PROCESS in order to get the right answer. Make sense? Giving each question type an ANSWERING PROCESS is really the KEY to effective test taking. Don't spend too much time on any one test question, but do choose the "best" answer and move on. Again, there is no penalty for guessing.

MISTAKE #4: Not practicing with real ACT questions.

You'll notice that most prep guides feature tons of "practice" ACT questions. These "practice" questions will harm your score FASTER than anything else. Here's why: the ACT test-makers do NOT allow any reproduction of questions from their past tests. Therefore, college prep companies have to "invent" their own questions for their books. That means students are practicing on questions that AREN'T REAL. This will HURT your score, because you won't be prepared when you get to the real test.

So what's the solution? The solution is to use the actual practice booklet that comes with the registration packet. This booklet is produced by ACT. You can also practice with ACT questions at www.actstudent.org.

MISTAKE #5: Not answering every question.

We've touched on this already. It's downright SILLY to skip any questions on the ACT, because you're not penalized for wrong answers. If you can't figure something out, GUESS! Of course, there is such a thing as "intelligent guessing", even when you're completely CLUELESS about the question.

MISTAKE #6: Doing the math problems the LONG way.

A lot of the math problems on the ACT feature a "long way" and a "short way". Part of what they're testing is your ability to spot the shortcuts. If you answer every question the long way, you'll never finish the entire Math section on time. It's just not possible. For example, say you have a right triangle with two sides being 6 and 8. They want to know the length of the longest side. The way to calculate this is by taking 6 squared added to 8 squared... and then finding the square root of the number. That's the long way. The SHORT way is to remember that when the sides of a right triangle are 3 and 4, the longest part is 5. Since 6 and 8 are multiples of 3 and 4, you know that the answer is going to be 2×5 . So, the answer is 10. That's the short way.

MISTAKE #7: Not skimming the questions BEFORE reading the passages.

In the Reading section, the long reading passages come FIRST, and then the questions follow. Therefore, it only seems "logical" to read the passages and then answer the questions. Right? Wrong. Think about it this way. Pretend you have a 1000-piece puzzle. All the pieces are scattered everywhere on the table in front of you. What's the first thing you do? Look at the box! You want to SEE what the puzzle will look like, right? And as you put the puzzle together, you'll keep looking back and forth at the box, to make sure you're on the right track. The ACT Reading passages are like your puzzle pieces. And the BOX is like your questions. If you read the passages FIRST,

you're tackling the puzzle without knowing what it's supposed to look like. So instead, you should **SKIM THE QUESTIONS FIRST**. This gives your mind an "image" of what you're looking for when you **READ THE PASSAGE**. This has a secondary benefit of keeping you alert and mentally sharp.

MISTAKE #8: Not taking the Writing test

The Writing test is currently optional. You don't have to take it. And after three hours of grueling testing, there's no wonder why students don't **WANT** to sit down and write an essay! But... not taking it could be a mistake. It all depends on the colleges you're applying to. A lot of schools **REQUIRE** it. And a lot of schools **RECOMMEND** it. And then some schools say it's "not needed". The way I see it, the only way you **SHOULDN'T** take it is if you are **TERRIBLE** at essay writing **AND** you are certain that you want to attend a college that doesn't need to see the score. Otherwise, you should take it. And the good news is, the essay can be **EASY** if you just prepare a little bit in advance. And if you're good at essay writing, it will be a **BREEZE**. For practice writing prompts and the scoring rubric, check out the practice booklet that comes with the registration packet, or go to www.actstudent.org.

MISTAKE #9: Not understanding what's coming.

When it comes right down to it, most students just don't know what they're getting themselves into when they take the ACT. They don't know how many questions each section has. They don't know how much time they'll have for each section. They don't know what types of questions to expect. They don't know the content that will (and won't) be covered. They don't know the directions in advance. They just don't understand what's coming. I once read a quote by a self-help expert who said that every minute you spend in **PREPARATION** will pay off **TENFOLD** later down the road. The ACT test definitely fits into that concept. Every minute spent in preparation for this test will pay off tenfold when it comes time to get your scores, apply for scholarships, and get into college.

MISTAKE #10: Not getting help.

The final mistake made by students and families on the ACT is **NOT GETTING HELP**. You weren't born knowing this stuff. It takes time, research, and energy to get prepared for this test. Continue taking college prep courses, especially in English, math, and science. Use the practice booklet and the official ACT web site. Ask your teachers for help and ACT strategies for their particular content area.

FIVE TIPS FOR PREVENTING CARELESS ERRORS ON THE ACT!

By Evan Wessler

Each year, basic errors cost students thousands of points on the SAT and ACT. How do you prevent errors? Read on to find out.

Mistakes are Costly

You probably know that the SAT and ACT test content knowledge, problem solving skills, and reading comprehension. But did you know that both exams also measure attention to detail? Are you aware that students can lose just as many points due to careless reading, sloppy calculation, and false assumptions as they can lose due to lack of actual knowledge or ability? If this surprises you, consider that we live in a world of detail. Changing a single word in a sentence or a single value in a mathematical expression can drastically affect the meaning of something we're reading or the solution to a problem we're trying to solve. The SAT and ACT are no different. This means that each year, basic errors cost students thousands of points on the SAT and ACT. Of course, all students eventually make mistakes—they're human, after all. Some students, however, do so more regularly than average, and suffer the consequences. Why? At Method Test Prep, we believe the problem is rooted in a systemic flaw in their approach to test-taking.

Preventing Careless Errors

The good news, then, is that we can address the problem proactively. Here are five tips for preventing yourself from making mistakes on the SAT, ACT, and other exams.

1. Write things down. The brain's short term memory and capacity for critical thinking are remarkable, but limited. This is especially so when you're stressed by time limitations, as you most certainly will be on the SAT and ACT. You cannot lean on your brain to store and process all of the information perfectly and simultaneously. This is why it's imperative to *write down* the steps in a calculation, *take a note or two* for each paragraph you read, and *underline* words that indicate certain question types. When you write things down, abstract thoughts become concrete realities; this makes words and numbers much easier to process. You may think that writing things down wastes precious time; in reality, you'll usually *save* time by getting things on the page, which will help prevent you from second-guessing and thinking in frustrating circles.

2. Let the answer choices confirm your answer—not the other way around. When you encounter a problem with formulaic answers—that is, answers that must fit a formula or standard format—write down the proper form first, and then find the choice that matches it. Here's a perfect example from an SAT sample test.

Which of the following is an equation of a circle in

the xy -plane with center $(0, 4)$ and a radius with

endpoint $\left(\frac{4}{3}, 5\right)$?

A) $x^2 + (y - 4)^2 = \frac{25}{9}$

B) $x^2 + (y + 4)^2 = \frac{25}{9}$

C) $x^2 + (y - 4)^2 = \frac{5}{3}$

D) $x^2 + (y + 4)^2 = \frac{3}{5}$

Students who know how circle formulas work know that the form must look like $x^2 + (y - 4)^2 = r^2$. However, many students will misread the signs and choose either 'B' or 'D', simply because they did not pay close enough attention to the signs in the parentheses. This might seem unlikely, but trust me: it isn't. By first writing down what you *expect* the answer to be, you can eliminate answer choices that don't match what you wrote down, staving off this particular type of careless error.

3. Physically cross out choices that are out of consideration. Imagine the following conversation between a tutor (T) and his or her student (S) while reviewing practice exam results.

T: It looks like you answered 'B' for number 5. How did you get there?

S: What? I circled 'C' on my paper.

T: Hmm. Your answer sheet shows you bubbled in 'B'.

S: Oh man . . .

I have this very conversation with at least one student per week. If you don't want to become the student in this scenario, *physically cross out* answer choices you're eliminating *in your test booklet*. It'll help you from making bubbling mistakes on your answer sheet.

4. Compare the current line of your calculations to the previous line. When manipulating an equation or performing a calculation under time pressure, students can make all sorts of small but significant careless errors.

Here's an example:

If the square root of $2x + 3$ is equal to 5, what is the value of $2x$?

- A) 11 $\sqrt{2x + 3} = 5$
- B) 14 $(\sqrt{2x + 3})^2 = (5)^2$
- C) 22 $2x + 3 = 25$
- D) 28 $2x = 28$

To solve for $2x$, the student added 3 to the right side of the equation instead of subtracting 3. Of course, the incorrect answer that arose from this process is right there in the choices. To prevent this error, the student could have compared his/her final step to the previous one, and considered, "how did I move that 3?" At this point, it's more likely that the student would realize the error, and instead of selecting the wrong answer, would then subtract 3 to arrive at choice 'C'. (By the way, the answers you'd obtain by solving for x alone are also in the choices; these are there for students who don't read carefully and assume they're always solving for the variable itself, and not for some other expression.)

5. Read on. On many ACT and SAT Reading passages, little details are explained over several sentences. Students tend to be careless with their reading, cutting the reading short and thereby missing important points that affect the correct answers to the questions that accompany the passages. Here's an example.

