

## Test-taking Strategies for the ACT Reading Test

The Reading portion of the ACT tests your ability to read a passage and answer questions of varying degree of difficulty about that passage. It does not test your ability to remember the passage or be able to discuss it. There is a difference in reading to remember and reading to find the correct answers.

General Things to Consider:

1. Consider which of the type(s) of reading passages are likely to be easiest for you to understand and do those sections first. Many students run out of time on this section and having the parts completed that you believe you will do well on is important.
2. Be on the look out for answers that are paraphrases of the passage or that use synonyms. These are often the correct answers. Rarely will the correct answer be a direct quote from the passage.
3. Distracters are used heavily in this section. A distracter is information, in this case a potential answer, which is meant to get you off track or lead you to choose the wrong answer.
  - a. Deceptive distracters are those which use words from the passage but distort them in some way. For example the passage might say “Tom loves going to the movies with Mary.” One of the answers might be “Tom fell in love with Mary at the movies.” Words from the passage are used, but they no longer have the same meaning.
  - b. Switch distracters are those in which the truth and has been taken and switched around. This often will involve a change in the words being used while at the same time the meaning is being reversed.
  - c. Extreme distracters are answers which includes phrases like “always so,” “never so”, “invariable so”. You should also watch out for words like completely and absolutely. It is pretty hard to prove the truth of statements like these so they won’t be correct answers on the ACT.
  - d. Distracters that sound “too nice” are another strategy ACT writers use to throw you off the track of a correct answer. Make sure before you select an answer such as this, that it really answers the question being asked and is found in the passage.

A Reading Strategy Suggested by Princeton Review:

1. Read the questions (not the answers) before reading the passage. When reading the questions underline key words that tell you what the

- question is about, what sort of information you are likely looking for within the passage.
2. Scan the passage for the same key words previously identified in the questions. Underline these keywords. Remember you are not reading to remember the passage; you are scanning it looking for words and phrases that directly connect to the questions being asked.
  3. Now read through the passage through quickly while jotting two to four words in the margin by each paragraph that will help you remember the basics of the paragraph's meaning. This will make it faster for you to go back and find the necessary answers. Pay attention to trigger words like however, despite, therefore, consequently etc. because they usually indicate that the focus of the paragraph is about to change.
  4. Now return to the questions. Read the first one carefully. Then carefully read the portion of the passage you have already identified as being related to this question looking for the correct answer as you read.

There will be a few questions for which the above reading strategy is useless. These are questions for which the answers will not be found in the reading passage. You will have to infer the answer or draw a conclusion as a result of reading the passage.

- Fact vs. opinion
- State of mind
- Vocabulary in context
- Except/Not/Least
- Roman numeral

All information taken from:

Martz, Geoff, Kim Magliore, and Theodore Silver. Cracking the ACT 2007 Edition. New

York: Random House, 2007.

Stewart, Mark Allan. ACT Assessment for Brainiacs. Lawrenceville, NJ: Thomson Peterson's, 2005.

