



**Curriculum Guide
for the ACT[®]
English, Reading & Writing**

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Using this Curriculum Guide in conjunction with the Triumph College Admissions Online StudyGuide for the ACT program

This guide is designed to complement the Triumph College Admissions Online StudyGuide for the ACT program. If you are not familiar with the StudyGuide program, please refer to the teacher tutorials located in the online program.

Once a diagnostic ACT test has been administered to a group of students, the online program can analyze their common weaknesses in each subtest of the ACT. The combination of individual skill review using the program and group instruction using this guide is a powerful way to prepare students to be successful on the ACT. Alternating between classroom instruction and individualized computer work is an effective way to raise ACT scores.

This guide is designed for teachers to use in core curriculum classrooms as well as in ACT prep classes. The ACT is actually a measure of concepts already being taught in the classroom. These lessons, therefore, are an extension of classroom instruction and are designed to cover the specific skills required on the ACT.

Five Steps to ACT Success

The five main sections of this guide are based on the five-step process used in the Online StudyGuide program.

Step 1: Understanding the ACT

This section of the Curriculum Guide provides an overview of the ACT structure and format. This step can be completed either by the teacher or a counselor.

Students need to understand the following:

- How to set a score goal and what is required to achieve that goal
- The ACT structure
- How the ACT is scored
- General test-taking strategies

The teacher may want to invite a guidance counselor into the classroom to share with students typical ACT score expectations for a number of colleges and universities. *Before taking the ACT, students should have a score goal in mind and know what is required to achieve that score.*

Note: Some teachers prefer to complete Step 1 after the students have received the results of their diagnostic ACT in Step 3. Students then will have a better understanding of the test since they've already experienced it.

Five Steps to ACT Success - continued

Step 2: Take a Diagnostic Test

This section contains brief instructions on how to assist your students in taking a realistic full-length practice ACT test to use for skills weakness diagnosis. It also contains a brief list of instructions for taking the test.

Step 3: Score and Analyze

This section describes the various elements of the skills diagnosis provided by the software, including inputting the scores and obtaining a detailed Skills Feedback Report of the student's weakest skills.

Step 4: Skills Review

Once students have received their Skills Feedback Report, they begin reviewing their weakest skills. The Skills Review section of this guide is divided into topic-specific skills lessons.

The first page of each lesson lists one or more student objectives for the lesson. The student objectives are brief statements of the intended outcome for the student after having completed the lesson.

Following the student objective are summary data for the lesson. These data include information useful in preparing a lesson plan for the presentation of the lesson.

TCA StudyGuide Lesson: This identifies the lesson in the program that contains related content.

Suggested Time for Lesson: This is the number of class periods recommended to adequately cover the material in the lesson. These times assume one class period is 45 minutes long. The expected lesson lengths have been rounded to 1/2 lesson, 1 lesson, or multiples of 1 lesson.

Materials for Lesson: These are sections of the lesson that are designed as student handouts and, therefore, meant to be copied.

Specific information for the teacher follows the summary data section. The math lessons present a "Quick Review" to aid the teacher in explaining the structure of the lesson, the skills the lesson will focus on, and teaching notes for the math skill reviewed in the lesson.

In the English, Reading, Science, and Writing sections, "To the Teacher" provides information and support for reviewing the concepts discussed in the lesson. The lecture notes are followed in most cases by worked examples. You may cover the worked examples in detail on the board or overhead projector or make a copy for students so they can work through them on their own and then discuss detailed solution methods.

Five Steps to ACT Success - continued

Informational handouts and/or practice test items for students typically follow the worked examples. These exercises are intended for students to use to practice the skills covered in the lesson. Each student handout page has a “Name” line at the top and this graphic



to indicate it is intended for distribution to students. Simulated test pages are formatted to resemble the ACT, as this will familiarize students with the look and feel of the test.

In the mathematics lessons, the sample test questions are followed by detailed solutions to the questions. You may also copy and distribute these pages to students after they complete the practice test questions. The solutions and explanations pages may also be used as teaching notes.

Step 5: Rework Your Test

In the final step of ACT test preparation, students go back to the practice test they took in Step 2 and rework the problems they got wrong. This section of the guide explains how the students should follow up after completing their skills review.

Notes for Teachers on Incorporating ACT Concepts in the Classroom

English: This test is designed to evaluate students' ability to revise and edit a sample written passage using their knowledge of grammar, usage, mechanics, punctuation, strategy, organization, and style. Students are not tested on spelling, vocabulary, or specific grammatical rules.

Many schools have incorporated writing across the curriculum to improve student writing. Properly implemented, this technique is effective. It is important to note that students often are required to do as much writing in social studies and science courses as they are in English language arts classes. Science and social studies teachers should grade papers with an eye on grammar, usage, and mechanics in addition to content. Teachers in these disciplines may not be comfortable assessing grammar, usage, and mechanics, but with training/review, they can successfully focus on the key skills assessed by the ACT.

Notes for Teachers on Incorporating ACT Concepts in the Classroom - continued

Mathematics: Teachers of upper-level math courses frequently remark on the difficulty students have when using basic math concepts. One reason is that students may not have used many of these skills since the 9th grade or earlier. The math on the ACT covers arithmetic, Algebra I and II, geometry, and some elementary trigonometry. There are only 3 or 4 trigonometry questions on the ACT math test, so even if students haven't taken a trigonometry class, they can still be successful on the Math test.

Math teachers (and even science teachers) at all levels should be reviewing the math concepts covered on the ACT with their students. This can be done as a warm-up/sponge activity or incorporated into the daily lesson plan. The goal is to ensure that students have thoroughly reviewed and can apply all necessary math concepts before taking the ACT.

The teacher should consider formatting some classroom quiz and test questions to mimic the ACT. It does not matter what subject matter is being taught—the important idea is to make the question format second-nature to students.

Reading: This section of the test is designed to evaluate students' reading comprehension. It is not important that your students know the subject matter in the passage, but it is important they be able to identify the answer based on both explicit and implicit information contained in the passage.

ACT reading passages come from reading material found in social studies, humanities, natural science, and prose fiction. To be successful on these questions, a student needs to be an aggressive active reader. Many language arts courses require students to use annotation as a tool to analyze text. This type of classroom activity will be extremely helpful for students when they take the ACT.

Typically, inferential thinking questions are the hardest questions for students. Anything the teacher can do to improve students' inferential thinking will maximize success on the ACT. Suggestions for activities to support students in this effort can be found in the Classroom Activities for Reading section.

Science: The content on this test covers biology, chemistry, earth/space sciences, and physics. There is no need for students to have actually taken any of these courses to be successful. However, students should have a good understanding of scientific terminology, procedures, and processes. Teachers outside the science department can help students with this part of the test. For example, almost a third of the questions involve analyzing data from graphs and tables, a skill commonly used in social studies classes (studying population shifts, for example).

Notes for Teachers on Incorporating ACT Concepts in the Classroom - continued

Written essay: The optional written essay will always be a persuasive argument essay based on student-related issues. ACT scorers will use a rubric (1 - 6) to score the essay. It will be evaluated as a first draft, not a finished essay. The scoring system evaluates a student's ability to develop a point of view and logically and clearly support that point of view using coherent, precise language and structure.

Deconstructing an argument/hypothesis or an analysis of cause-and-effect relationships can serve as a persuasive argument exercise and is a good way for students to learn what makes a strong, well-supported argument. The teacher can accomplish this with subject matter/texts already used in the classroom. Classroom debate is also an effective way to build the skills needed for forming and supporting a position.

All teachers should be familiar with the essay-scoring rubric to help them assess student writing against a standard. Just as with the English and Reading tests, teachers in disciplines outside the English department can help students develop their writing skills and their ability to persuasively argue a position.

The bottom line is that a classroom teacher can help students do better on the ACT without being an ACT expert. Focusing some attention on the ACT not only will increase ACT scores but also can assist students with state tests.

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