

The New Enhanced ACT® Much of the Same with One Big Change

by John Baylor

Increasing that ACT® score remains the best-paying job a high school student can have: higher scores trigger higher scholarships. Test Day is Pay Day. Also, the new Enhanced ACT® largely tests the same content as the now retired Legacy ACT®. So what's new?

There are fewer questions and more time provided per question. Students will celebrate. But there is a cautionary note: the number of questions has shrunk so much that now each question counts so much more—potentially one point per question. That is a lot.

Section	Former Legacy ACT®		New Enhanced ACT®	
	Total Questions	Questions That Count	Total Questions	Questions That Count
English	75	All	50	40
Math	60	All	45	41
Reading	40	All	36	27
Science	40	All	40	34

With fewer questions that count per section, each of those questions count much more. Thus, I feel it's even more important for each student to truly prepare because of the score impact of each grammar rule, math formula, reading strategy, and science strategy.

There are small changes. Grammar comprises about 60% of the questions when it used to make up 66%. Advanced math topics make up a larger percentage of the math questions and is an ever evolving list of topics. Reading simply has fewer questions and much more time per question, so fewer students should run out of time. Science is now technically optional, but any student seeking a scholarship, honors college, or selective college admissions improves their chances by preparing hard and submitting a science score; I highly encourage it.

Further, it is impossible to know which questions within each section count and which are “Field Test” questions that don't, so each student should try equally hard on each question. However, we have been told by the ACT® that the first and last passages in English, Reading, and Science will always count. This revelation should not alter the strategy in English and Science, but it should affect the strategy in Reading only for those who regularly run out of time. Thus, we will share a simple Reading strategy tweak with our OTC schools this spring for their students with time challenges in Reading.

The new Enhanced ACT® remains the life-changing opportunity the ACT® always has been, while providing more time per question and largely testing the same content. However, the score impact for each question has grown significantly. We encourage each junior and senior to prepare hard for each tested concept so their score jumps. Their post-high school dreams should then be more affordable and likely, whether they seek a four- or two-year college, service in the U.S Military, or a career in the trades—all promising choices. Test Day is Pay Day.

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