

ACT English Test

40 questions, 45 minutes

Sample ?s from 0556A

Usage/Mechanics

53% of the test

Punctuation, Grammar & Usage

Sentence Structure



ACT English Test

75 questions, 45 minutes

Rhetorical Skills
47% of the test



Strategy-Style
Organization -
Redundancy - Tone

STRATEGIES FOR THE ENGLISH SUBTEST

Be aware of the **Writing Style** used in the essay.

Some are narratives written in 1st person, more **informal**

- Others are **scholarly** essays, often written in 3rd person
- Some questions may require you to choose an answer based on **tone**

Consider a Question's Context (what comes before and after the underlined part) **Before You** Choose an Answer

Some people find it most useful to **skim** an essay and its **questions** before trying to answer any of them.

- Many people don't have time to skim the whole passage but you can **NOT** just look at the underlined portion.
- As you're answering a question be sure to read a sentence or two **beyond** the portion underlined in order to better determine **context**.

Be Aware of the Connotations of Words

Vocabulary isn't tested in an isolated way on the ACT English test.

You will need to use **context clues** and careful reading to focus on what the words mean and what **associations** they have for a typical reader.

Examine the Underlined Portions

Note the **differences** in the answer choices.

Avoid correcting mistakes in the essay and accidentally making a new mistake.

- Determine the best answer in one of two ways---try each one or decide on your own and find the one that matches most closely.

Double-check your answer

- Once you have selected the answer you believe is best, **reread** the sentence or sentences, substituting your answer for the underlined or boxed portion of the test.
- **Boxed questions** refer to **whole** parts of sections of the essay or passage.



Watch out!

Be careful with **two part** questions.
Remember to look back.

- Watch for interrelated questions. You may need to consider questions in a different order. Or you may need to consider two questions together.



BE CONCISE!!!

LOTS of ?'s Address This!

Often times the shortest answer is correct
Avoid Wordiness or Redundancy

Example from a DIFFERENT test

....it occurred to me that each species was the
consequencing result of genetic selection

- correct answer iswas the result of
- Consequently and Result Of mean the same thing



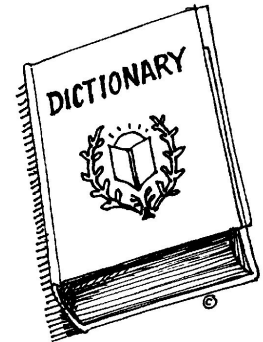
READ ?'s **CAREFULLY** - Even if you feel like you are in a bit of a hurry

Some ?'s may **ask** for the one that is **INCORRECT** or that would **NOT** work! Statistically speaking these are tough.

- Many of the questions ask which one provides the most **SPECIFIC description or evidence** -- generally they are looking for concise answers but not when they ask for **SPECIFICS**

TRANSITIONS

In order to select the **correct transitional or connecting word**, you need to look at the **CONTEXT.**



Example:

Contrasting Ideas: however, conversely, etc.

Supporting Ideas: Therefore, For example, In fact, As a result, etc.

Usage/Mechanics

Punctuation questions involve identifying and correcting misplaced, missing or unnecessary punctuation marks:

- Commas
- Apostrophes
- Colons, semi-colons, and dashes
- Periods, question marks, exclamation points





Parallel Structure (requires looking at context)

Make sure items in a list (words or phrases) are in the same format.

We went **biking, fishing, and swimming.**

I want to **clean my room, pack my clothes, and visit my family.**

Singing, dancing, and running always make me happy.



Here is an example of Parallel Structure

Everything should be in the same format & structure

It is her blanket at night, being her pillow for mid-afternoon naps, and her towel after bathing.

A) NO CHANGE

B) used for a pillow for mid-afternoon naps

C) for mid-afternoon naps it is her pillow,

D) her pillow for mid-afternoon naps (CORRECT)

Grammatical Agreement

Subject and Verb Agreement

The **owner** of the bicycles are going to sell them."

Should be

- The **owner** of the bicycles is going to sell them."



Pronoun and Antecedent

"Susan and Mary left her briefcases in the office."

should be

- "Susan and Mary left their briefcases in the office."

Agreement Check for Understanding

Agreement is one of the trickier concepts. Do you think you have it? Many other things affect it (the use of and/or, the use of tricky words, etc.). There are much tougher examples. Let's find out how well you get it!

Take a break from listening and start interacting!

Good Luck!

HERE

We'll check out some practice test questions later.



Adjectives and Adverbs

“Danielle spread frosting liberal on the cat.”

“liberal” is an adverb-it modifies spread which is a verb

Adverbs almost always end in “ly”
should be

- “Danielle spread frosting liberally on the cat.”

Verb Forms

“Fritz had just began to toast Lydia’s marshmallows when the dog howled.”

wrong tense-should be



- “Fritz had just begun to toast Lydia’s marshmallows when the dog howled.”

Pronoun Forms and Cases

“Seymour and Sue annoyed there parents all the time.”

wrong one-should be

- “Seymour and Sue annoyed their parents all the time.”

There-Their-They're

There-an adverb used to point out location...**There is a big dog under the porch.**

Their-a possessive personal pronoun...**Their books need to be covered.**

- **They're**-a contraction for "they are"...
They're late for the basketball game.

THAN vs THEN

TH**A**N - compares

You would like to be compared to an “A” student - th**An**

He is funner **than** she is.



TH**E**N - time

First we will go shopping; **then** we will go for lunch.



Sentence Structure Errors

Subordinate or dependent clauses

Run-on sentences

Comma splices

Sentence fragments

- Misplaced modifiers
- Shifts in verb tense
- Parallel structure



Adjectives and Adverbs

Questions #48, 61, 64

Adjectives modify nouns; adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

You can recognize adverbs easily because many of them are formed by adding -ly to an adjective.

Question #48

,I realized for the first time what a bewilderingly variety of fish was available.

bewilderingly is an adverb (see the -ly)

It is being used to modify variety

Variety is a noun

You can't modify a noun with an adverb, only with an adjective.....

So you have to change bewilderingly to bewildering which is answer H.

Question #48 continued

what a bewilderingly variety of fish was available

Some students choose answer G because they believe that the verb “was” is incorrect. Fish is plural so they may think that they need to use “were”.....

answer G:

bewilderingly variety of fish were.....is incorrect for two reasons

- 1. bewilderingly is still an adverb, you need an adjective**
- 2. the subject of the sentence is “variety” which is singular not “fish”**

so you need to use the singular form “was”

Question #64

This question also contains an adverb but it's a different spin on the choice between adverb and adjective.

.....Latimer made significantly important contributions to the development of electric.....

The correct answer is J.....taking out “important” and changing the adverb to an adjective “significant” modifying contributions. You don't need both...significant and important are the same.

Question #61

The career of Lewis Howard Latimer, a pioneer in the electric lighting industry, is a model of how much artistically ability, technical skill, and scientific expertise.....

Once again, “artistically” is an adverb, note the -ly, it is modifying ability which is a noun. You need to change it to an adjective and the correct answer is C~

C. how artistic

.....is a model of how artistic ability, technical skill, and

This change also creates **PARALLEL STRUCTURE!** (see the next slide)



PARALLEL STRUCTURE

#25, 41, 61, 63

PREPARE for a brief **explanation** of parallel structure and **examples**.

Everything should be in the same format & structure

25) It is her blanket at night, being her pillow for mid-afternoon naps, and her towel after bathing.

A) NO CHANGE

B) used for a pillow for mid-afternoon naps

C) for mid-afternoon naps it is her pillow,

D) her pillow for mid-afternoon naps (CORRECT)

Question #41

41) **Utility workers** use a bubble gauge to determine the rate of flow of gas in a pipeline, to navigate airplane pilots they use a bubble sextant, and **carpenters** use a bubble level to build houses straight and true.

A) NO CHANGE

B) where a bubble sextant is used by airplane pilots in navigation

C) airplane pilots use a bubble sextant to navigate, (CORRECT!)

D) a bubble sextant to navigate is used by airplane pilots

ALWAYS CHOOSE THE SIMPLEST CORRECT EXAMPLE

QUESTIONS #12, 26, 41, 42, 43, 49, 50, 54, 63, 66
ARE ALL EXAMPLES OF CHOOSING THE
SIMPLEST WAY TO EXPRESS THE THOUGHT
and AVOID REDUNDANCY.

#49 Not having any fish yet, it....correct answer is
D “It”.....you don’t need the “not having
any fish yet” part. It is expressed earlier in the
paragraph.

Questions #50, 54

#50it occurred to me that each species was the consequent result of genetic selection

correct answer is J.....was the result of

#54the baby guppies (you could hardly see them) were almost invisible

correct answer is G.....were almost invisible

QUESTIONS #63, 66

#63 As a designer, an inventor, and besides being an expert legal witness,

correct answer is B and “an” expert legal witness

#66 Latimer, who was born in the last century in Massachusetts in 1848

correct answer is H “was born in” Massachusetts

QUESTIONS #11, 52, 55
NON-ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Use a pair of commas in the middle of a sentence to set off clauses, phrases, and words that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence. Use one comma before to indicate the beginning of the pause and one at the end to indicate the end of the pause.

#52 It didn't take long, though for the.....

Correct Answer is J It didn't take long, though, for the.....

NON-ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Use a pair of commas in the middle of a sentence to set off clauses, phrases, and words that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence. Use one comma before to indicate the beginning of the pause and one at the end to indicate the end of the pause.

#55 They grew quickly, however, and soon more were born,

Correct Answer is A No change

TRANSITIONS

7, 9, 17, 33, 45, 74

Determine what transitional word makes the most sense in the context. Look at prior sentence!

Know what transitional words mean. [CLICK](#)
for an overview of the meaning of
transitional words. HANDOUT also available.

Try online activities for additional practice and
online quiz.

Question #33

The very idea of bubbles and the word bubble tend to make us laugh. Usually, we **generally** use the word bubble to express amusement.

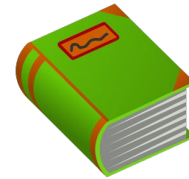
This is also an example of **avoiding redundancy**. Answers A, B, and C are all redundant because of the word generally

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. Typically,
- C. In fact, more often than not
- D. Indeed, (CORRECT answer!)

Question #17

Recently, Kali for Women broadened its readership by publishing some of its English translations in the U.S. Honestly, *Truth Tales*, is a collection of seven short stories, one from each of India's seven major languages.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. Nevertheless, *Truth Tales*
- C. One such offering, *Truth Tales* (correct!)
- D. Consequently, *Truth Tales*



AGREEMENT

37, 39, 44

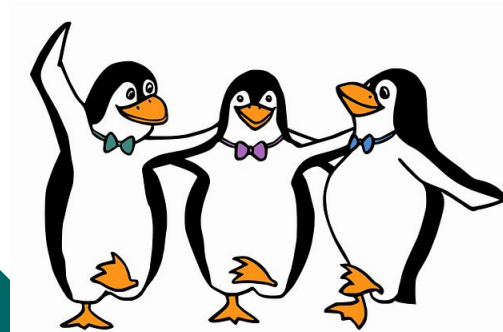
**Subject and Verbs must agree AND
Subjects and Pronouns must agree**

Reminders:

- **singular verbs end in s**

He dances

They dance



- **Also don't be distracted by words that come after the subject**

Question #37

The airborne **soap bubble**, a mere gas globule surrounded by a thin film of liquid, lends themselves to the study of interference effects in light wave reflection.

B. Itself (CORRECT)



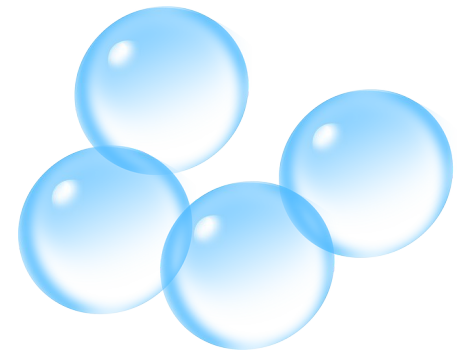
not in agreement as is
soap bubble singular / themselves plural
oneself applies to people
theirselves not a word

Question 39

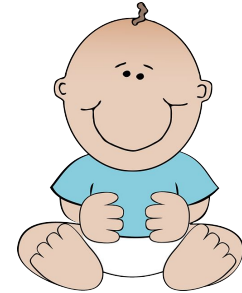
Speculation about bubbles in liquids also lead to interesting investigation.

B) leads

- **speculation is singular**
- **don't be distracted by the phrase after speculation**
- **singular verbs end in an s**



COMPLEX SENTENCES



Complex sentences have:

a **dependent clause** (otherwise known as a subordinating clause) which can NOT stand alone. Dependent clauses are DEPENDENT (like a baby is dependent on adults) and must be joined w/ an independent clause or they are a FRAGMENT

+

an **independent clause** which is a complete sentence that CAN stand alone

Complex Sentences Continued

’ If the DEPENDENT clause comes FIRST, a comma IS NEEDED

If the DEPENDENT CLAUSE comes second, a comma is NOT needed.



Because I love math, I am going to be an engineer.

I am going to be an engineer because I love math.

#27

If for example, you wonder why bubbles appear in soft drinks only after, you open the bottle, you can study the process of cavitation--the production of bubbles in liquid when pressure is suddenly reduced.

NO comma needed until after the dependent clause which is bottle

H. drinks only after (correct answer!)

Question # 73

In this sample you create a complex sentence out of a fragment.
Since the **dependent clause comes first, a comma is needed.**

#73) When General Electric and Westinghouse formed. The Board of Patent Control, Latimer became its chief draftsman and expert witness.

C) formed the (correct answer!)

When General Electric and Westinghouse formed the Board of Patent Control -- **dependent clause**

Latimer became its chief draftsman and expert witness --
independent clause

CHECK out online links on Ms. Kaminski's web page for more review, clarification, and interactive online activities!

Books are available in the LMC that will provide sample questions AND strategies

We can provide more samples as well

