Mrs. Schultz and Mr. Keene’s

ACT Logo

Tips

**Friday Night:**

Eat a good meal rich in carbohydrates (such as pasta) at a reasonable hour. Be in bed by 11pm at the

latest. Set two alarms or ask family and friends to ensure you wake up.

**Saturday Morning:**

Wake up one hour before you need to leave, do something physical to “wake up,” and take a shower. Wear comfortable and casual clothing, but avoid being too comfortable. Dress in layers as the temperature inside the test room may vary. Eat a healthy, substantial breakfast. As a rule, protein is better than sugar. Avoid heavy foods (such as omelets) that could cause indigestion. Know which building *and* parking lot to use. Plan to arrive by 7:45am, so you don’t feel rushed.

**Items to Bring:**

Pencils—Make sure all pencils are sharpened and have good erasers (latex-free are the best). Mechanical pencils and ink pens are not allowed.

Calculator—Check before the test day to ensure your calculator is allowed. If it isn’t solar-powered, put in new batteries or bring an extra set to the test.

Identification and Registration—Photo ID and admission ticket are required.

Food—Gum, hard candy or mints will give you a little sugar and help keep you alert. Be considerate of others and eat them quietly with your mouth closed. Bring a light snack and drink for the 10 minute break between Math and Reading tests.

Wrist watch—This will help you pace yourself on the tests as you are only notified when 5 minutes remain on each test. (You can set it to noon at the start of each test!) Be sure to turn off any sounds or alarms. Cell phones and other electronic devices are NOT allowed...you will be removed if found!

Tissues—A small pack or a handful in your pocket will keep you from being self-conscious about the sniffles during winter test dates especially.

## **General Tips:**

* Skip the directions. Read the instructions and directions provided with practice exams as they are the same as those found on the actual test.
* Answer EVERY question as there is no penalty for guessing. First eliminate any answers that don’t seem reasonable to improve your chances.
* Pace yourself…check your progress near the half-way point. Skip difficult questions until the end. Clearly mark the questions you skip in your test booklet and NOT on the answer sheet.
* Read each question carefully and be on the lookout for words such as *not* and *except*. To ensure you are answering the correct question, it may be a good idea to underline or circle it in your test booklet.
* Don’t panic! Work the entire time and do not give up.

## **English Tips:**

* Read (skim) the entire passage first (roughly 1.5 minutes). Focus on grammar and revision skills, NOT comprehension.
* Answer diction and grammar questions first; they are usually the easiest to answer quickly.
* “Listen” for errors as you read. You can often “hear” an error as you say a sentence in your head.
* Read ALL answers carefully; answers often look similar, sometimes differing only by a comma.
* Some of the phrases will not contain any errors. In fact, “NO CHANGE” is the correct choice about 25% of the time.

## **Math Tips:**

* Draw a picture if one is not provided. Figures given are not drawn to scale, so mark them with given measures or symbols (such as parallel or congruent).
* Know the following translations: *of* means multiply and *per* means divide.
* Know the area and perimeter formulas for triangles, rectangles, and circles; know how to calculate the volume and surface area of a box. Formulas for all other figures will be given.
* If a problem is given in terms of fractions, decimals, or percents, consider using an alternate form to find the answer. Remember that fractions represent a division problem and percents are fractions with 100 in the denominator.
* If the question and/or answer set are given in terms of variables only, substitute simple numbers such as 0, ±1, and ±2 (or 100 in the case of a percent problem) to help determine the answer.
* Most answers are listed from least to greatest, so you can use a technique called *backsolving* to find the correct answer: start by trying the number given as choice C or H (the middle value) and then eliminate choices based on the result being too high or too low.
* Do not overuse your calculator! The test is written so that every problem can be solved without one and you lose valuable time using your calculator for basic operations. It may not help to borrow a more powerful graphing calculator on the day of the test if you don’t know how to use it. A good rule of thumb is: *Think with your pencil*. Set up the problem in your test booklet first and take a moment to consider what a reasonable answer would be before using the calculator.

## **Reading Tips:**

* Read the passage actively: spend about three minutes and underline or circle any key points. However, don’t get caught up in the passage as you don’t need to memorize information.
* Read with awareness of the author’s goal, tone, theme, and major points.
* Be sure to read above and below the specific line references in questions to better understand the context.
* Save difficult questions (such as inferring) for last and answer easier questions (such as vocabulary) first. Although you can answer questions in any order, it is best to finish one passage completely before going on to the next.
* Be careful on questions that use the phrase “which of the following is NOT…”

## **Science Tips:**

* If a passage seems difficult, skip it; *data representation* passages are often the easiest and *research summary* passages are sometimes the most difficult.
* When reading passages, aim at a general understanding on the first reading and do not dwell on a specific aspect of data. If the passage contains conflicting viewpoints, consider similarities and differences between the scientists’ arguments.
* When reading tables and charts, look for the following: labels on axes (graphs) and columns (tables), trends in data, and maximum or minimum values. Look for connections between multiple data representations.