

Top Ten SAT and ACT Test-Taking Tips

Brought to you by the American School Counselor Association

1. Be Equipped

On the night before the test you should gather everything you'll need: the admission ticket, a valid form of photo identification, several #2 pencils, a calculator with fresh batteries (for the SAT only), a watch, and a high-energy snack.

2. Don't Cram

You've worked hard. The best thing to do the evening before the test is to get a good night's sleep. You've covered the content and you've perfected the skills. Now it's time to get in test mode -- calm, rested, confident, and ready.

3. Dress in Layers

The climate in test centers can vary from sauna-like to frigid. Be prepared for both extremes and everything in-between. You need to be comfortable to do your best.

4. Arrive Early

You may want to scope out your test location before test day to ensure that you know where you're going. Getting to the test should be the least of your concerns.

5. Don't Spend too Much Time on One Question

Each question is worth the same number of points. If a question is confusing or too time-consuming, don't lose your cool, instead, move on to greener pastures. You can come back to hard questions if you have time at the end of a section.

6. Don't Look for Unscored Questions/Sections

The experimental section on the SAT is well-camouflaged. Sometimes the ACT contains experimental questions that are scattered throughout the sections. Do your best on every question--that way, you're covered.

7. Keep Track of Where You Are in a Section

On the SAT, obvious answer choices early in a set may be correct. Obvious choices near the end of a set are often booby traps.

8. Guess Aggressively

If you don't know an answer, don't leave the question blank or guess randomly. Eliminate the choices you know are wrong, then make an educated guess from the remaining options. Remember, if you can eliminate even one answer choice then it pays to guess on the SAT. On the ACT, students aren't penalized for guessing. Only the correct answers count toward their score, so it is better to guess than leave a blank.

9. Be Careful Filling in the Answer Grid

Make sure you're filling in answers next to the right numbers.

10. Relax

Your attitude and outlook are crucial to your test-day performance. Be confident.