



February 24, 2022

College
101:



In the previous issue, the **Writing Section advice** was “**Write more!**” Huh? Why? How?

- The writing section is the final portion of the test. Students are tired! It is easy to provide the most cursory writing sample in these situations. Please don't. Length matters.
- Make the effort to craft a passage that follows the typical 5 paragraph format – opening statement/thesis, 3 supporting paragraphs, and conclusion.
- To make this task go more smoothly, most students spend the first 8-10 minutes to:
 - brainstorm key points
 - decide on a thesis statement
 - select 2-3 ideas in support and at least 1 counterargument to demonstrate your ability to rebut/defend your argument
 - craft a quick outline (write it out in the test booklet)
 - set paragraph deadlines for remaining time (30 min)

Ideas to keep in mind:

- **Facts don't matter**/nuance does – you can make up whatever information you need to make your argument/just make sure that you develop and analyze it.
- Be clear in your perspective – craft an argument that makes it obvious that you considered the alternatives and picked the “best” option.
- You get to decide – be confident in your choice! **There is no wrong answer only an unsupported answer.**
- It's ok to use the question as your thesis (to prove you are on prompt) if you are hitting a “more creative option” roadblock.
- Fully support each point – think short paragraph not single statement. (**Remember: you can make up all the “facts” you need to support your claims. Saying “government research has shown” or “as reported recently in the New York Times,” etc. is completely OK!**)
- Transitions matter – only use a “first, second, third” strategy if you are running out of time.
- Use precise language/specific claims with supporting details, varied sentence structure/opening words.
- **First and last paragraph matter most** – ACT readers should be able to grasp the “whole” story through a quick read of these two sections.
- Do yourself and your reader a favor – write legibly and underline your thesis.

Important information for
college applications:

SPCPA School Code: 242 284

Counselor: Alison Green
(greena@spcpa.org)

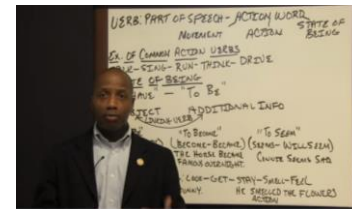
School Information:
16 W 5th St
St Paul, MN 55102
(651) 290-2225



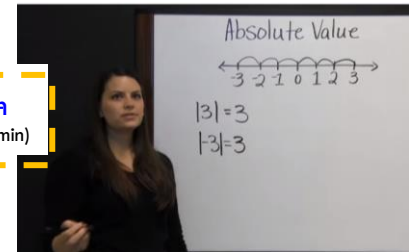
When: Tuesday 3/8/22

Where: SPCPA

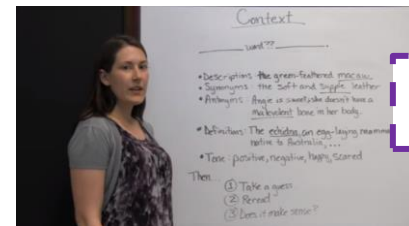
What: More ACT Test Prep Videos
from Mometrix



English
(4 hrs. 12)



Math
(4 hrs. 4 min)



Reading
(1 hr. 26 min)



Science
(55 min)



College 101: More ACT Thoughts



The stress leading up to the ACT can seem *intense*. That desire to do your best is great, but some perspective about this upcoming event might also be helpful...

Unlike students in other parts of the world, Americans may take college entrance exams (ACT and/or SAT) as often as they wish (and can afford). Both tests are offered multiple times every year.

New since this fall is the reality that many schools have become [test optional](#) for at least a trial period due to the complications caused by the pandemic. Schools that intend to remain test blind can be found [here](#). Schools that did not make this decision before the pandemic may revert to requiring standardized test scores. The big question is when? This fall? Next fall? The situation is too fluid to know for sure. **Bottom line, you may NOT need an ACT (or SAT) score but having one may give you more options.**

Some schools will require a test score. Perhaps more importantly, **not having an ACT score puts more pressure on the other parts of your applications.** Your GPA is “set” by the end of junior year as far as most colleges are concerned. If your GPA is not telling the full story (ex. more than one semester of ECs, etc.), then including a test score with your application for colleges that still consider (if not require) them could be to your advantage. **ACT scores are the single “biggest item” in your college application checklist that you can change** (assuming you’re willing to work hard enough to make a difference in your scores).

So, preparing for your first test whether it is in school or at a national testing location later this year makes sense. Giving yourself “permission” to retake them later this year or anytime prior to completing your college applications, also makes sense as it takes the pressure off the first in-school experience. [Early June dates are awesome](#) (brains still on plus free time to really focus on the test). Wrapping up testing in the fall of senior year (October) ensures that results will be available for sharing by the earliest application deadlines.

Not testing/no plans to test? There will be post-high school options available to you. Is there any benefit to the ACT if I intend to begin my college career at a community college? YES. The ACT can replace the student’s Accuplacer scores (an untimed placement exam required for admission). One benefit of the ACT in these situations is that it allows a calculator for the entire math section (calculator use is limited to the more difficult problems in the Accuplacer).

Bottom line? If sleep alludes you the night before the test or you have not had a chance to prepare as you had hoped, the world has NOT ended! Do your best then take the ACT again if you think it might help your future applications. It’s your choice/your score!

THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF TEST-OPTIONAL SCHOOLS

A test-optional college lets students decide whether they want to submit test scores with their application. Most test-optional schools will consider SAT and ACT scores if they are submitted but focus on other factors they believe are stronger predictors of a student’s potential to succeed in college. These schools look at a student’s essays, recommendations, grades, and coursework just as (or more) closely than your test scores.

A test-flexible college lets students submit other test scores in place of the SAT or ACT, such as one or more SAT Subject Tests, an International Baccalaureate exam, or Advanced Placement test.

A test-blind college will not consider test scores, even if you submit them.

TEST-OPTIONAL POLICIES DIFFER FROM COLLEGE TO COLLEGE

Some test-optional policies come with restrictions. For example:

- Some colleges require test scores for out-of-state or international students, or for students pursuing certain majors.
- Some test-optional schools may determine your test-optional eligibility using an index calculated from your GPA, test scores, and class rank.
- Some schools may ask you to submit test scores for placement in the freshman class or to take a placement exam.
- Some may ask for additional materials instead of test scores, such as samples of your academic work, scientific research, or additional recommendation letters.

Due to COVID-19, many colleges have changed or lifted some of these restrictions, so be sure to check with the college to confirm how it will use test scores in the admissions process.

OTHER PARTS OF YOUR APPLICATION WILL BE CLOSELY SCRUTINIZED

Colleges want as much information about you as possible. Without test scores, it’s likely that other parts of your application -- your grades and grade trends, essays, extracurricular activities, and achievements -- must be strong enough to make the college want to admit you.

TEST SCORES MIGHT BE REQUIRED FOR MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS

Many test-optional colleges look at test scores when awarding merit scholarships, so not submitting them might put you at a disadvantage. Be sure to confirm all scholarship requirements before applying.