

# ACT READING TEST STRATEGIES

You will have FOUR passages to read followed by TEN questions each—that's 40 questions in 35 minutes. Obviously, using your 35 minutes strategically is the best way to raise your ACT reading score. Here are some time-saving strategies:

► READ THE PASSAGES FROM THE EASIEST GENRE TO THE HARDEST FOR YOU. As in every part of the ACT, always do what is easiest first.

- **Prose fiction:** stories—calling for who, what, where, when, and inferences from the text about meaning, style, and purpose
- **Social sciences**—history, psychology, etc., calling for details and inferences
- **Humanities**—art, music, dance, architecture, calling for details and meaning in context
- **Natural sciences**—biology, physical sciences, chemistry, calling for main idea, details, technical descriptions; few inferences but understanding concepts

► USE THE FOUR-STEP SYSTEM:

1. **Skim the 10 questions** for "lead" (important) words and phrases and underline or circle these clues. Take about 30 seconds to do this.

example: The Mayo Clinic researchers probably would have said that stress

example: As discussed in the passage, the Arts and Crafts movement produced:

2. **Scan the reading passage** very quickly, looking for the same lead words you marked in step 1. Every time you see a lead word, underline or circle it. Take about 30 seconds to do this.
3. **Skim and Scribble: Re-read the passage**, not to understand or remember everything, but quickly, scribbling a few words in the margin beside each paragraph that note the paragraph's main idea. Do this quickly, with a brief annotation. Give the topic sentence a bit more attention. As you skim, circle signal words such as *Therefore*, *However*, *Yet*, *Ironically*, *Unfortunately*, *Consequently*. These signal words are clues to meaning. Take about 60 seconds for this step.

You have now used about TWO MINUTES of the eight minutes you should spend on each reading passage (skim Qs—30; scan passage—30; skim and scribble passage—60).

4. Return to the 10 questions and answer the easiest first, generally those that point directly to a line or lines in the passage. Skip harder questions until you have answered all the easier ones. Refer to the passage and to your scribbles and circled lead words. Use POE for answers that you know are wrong. You should have about 6 minutes left for step 4, or about 30 seconds per question. After using POE, guess your letter of the day if need to.

- **MARK YOUR ANSWERS IN YOUR TEST BOOKLET.** Bubble your answers on answer key after finishing all 10 questions.

### **TO RECAP:**

**Step 1** (30 seconds)—Skim the questions for important words

**Step 2** (30 seconds)—Scan the passage for these important words

**Step 3** (60 seconds)—Skim the passage and scribble main ideas and signal words

**Step 4** (6 minutes)—Read the questions and refer to the passage for answers

- Answer the easiest first
- Use POE
- Guess after about 30 seconds—don't leave anything unanswered

Bubble answers (30 seconds)—this allows you to skip harder questions and return

### **ADDITIONAL TIPS:**

- beware of "distractors"—partially correct answer choices that tempt you
- recognize answer choices that are a rewording of ideas in the passage
- beware of deceptive answers that use direct wording from the passage but distort the meaning or context
- beware of answer choices with extremes—completely, perfectly, always, never
- read the questions and answer choices more thoroughly than the passage