

SAT / ACT Independent Practice: Techniques for Common Questions



For more help, go to “Getting the Most Out of Khan Academy and the College Board Book” and “Hints For Practice and Time Management” under [TIPS and TRICKS](#) on www.yourstepstocollege.com.

Reading

- **Main Idea**
 - Read the beginning and end of the section the question asks about. Pick the answer that is most similar to the end.
- **“In the context of the passage the word (blank) most closely means...”**
 - Create a short paraphrase of what the author means by using this word. Pick the closest answer.
 - Do not come up with a synonym, substitute the answers into the sentence, or use your own definition of the word.
- **Double Passage Sections**
 - Read the first passage and do all the questions about the first passage.
 - Read the second passage and do all the questions about the second passage.
 - Then do the questions about both passages.

Math

- **Matching an equation to a graph**
 - Pick a point on the graph and plug the (x,y) coordinates from that point in for x and y in the equation(s).
- **A geometry or algebra problem that involves finding a length**
 - Draw a right triangle and use the Pythagorean Theorem.
 - If you see multiples of the numbers **3, 4, 5** or **5, 12, 13**, look for Pythagorean Triplets.
- **An equation and (x,y) coordinates**
 - Plug the (x,y) coordinates in for x and y in the equation and solve. Often the question will ask you to solve for a letter like a or b , which is designated as a constant. That just means the letter has a numerical value, which should be your answer.

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English / Writing

- **A semicolon**
 - On the SAT and ACT, this is grammatically equivalent to a period. Never put one into a sentence if you couldn't also place a period there. If two answers have identical words but one has a semicolon and the other has a period, they are both wrong. Since they are grammatically the same, the test can't make you choose between them.
- **A colon**
 - Usually, a colon is placed before a re-statement or example of the previous clause. Whatever comes before the colon must be an independent clause. The SAT and ACT rarely test the use of a colon before a list.
- **A period, a semicolon, or a comma followed by the words *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so***
 - These are the most common ways to separate two independent clauses on the test. If you see one of those options in the answers, look for an independent clauses before and after the underlined portion in the passage.

ACT Science

- **"Most likely"**
 - Make an educated guess. Do not expect the answer to be directly stated.
- **"Suppose"**
 - There is new information in the question. Make sure you understand it well.
- **Passages with Tables or Figures**
 - Go right to the questions without reading any text.
 - Always look for the answer in the figures first. If the keywords from the question or answers aren't there skim the text.
- **Passages with Multiple Scientists, Students, or Hypotheses**
 - Skim the introduction and read the first sentence of each scientist, student, or hypothesis before going to the questions.
 - Try to answer each question from those first sentences before skimming the passage for the keywords from the question or answers.