

After 65 years with the same format, the ACT is launching a new format, starting in Sept 2025. These changes will affect the Class of 2027 and younger. The NEW ACT will provide students with **fewer** questions in each section and **more time per question**. And, the science section is now optional! According to the ACT folks, the **current** ACT **content** will be the same as the new ACT's content, making current practice materials relevant for future prep! Key changes are summarized below:

1. Shorter Test and More Time per Question *(Overall testing time will decrease from 3 hours to just over 2 hrs)*

- The total number of questions will be reduced by 44 across the English, Math, and Reading sections.
- Students will now have more time, gaining an additional 10 seconds per question.

2. Optional Science Section

- Students can choose to include or exclude the Science section, providing flexibility for those who may not need it for their college or career plans.
- STEM-focused students can still take the Science section to showcase their strengths in this area.

3. New Composite Score

- Starting Sept 2025, the Composite score will be only based on the English, Math, and Reading.
- Additional sub-composites:
 - **STEM Score:** A combination of Sci and Math. **ELA Score:** Average of English, Reading, and Writing.

4. Online and Paper Options

- National Test Dates will now include a choice between paper and an online test option
- Students taking the test online can complete English, Math, and Reading in one day;
 - Science and Writing can be taken separately during the testing window.
- Paper test-takers will follow the traditional format, with the option to spread testing over two days.

5. Updated Content and Practices

- **English:** Shorter passages and stems will be introduced, with new argumentative essay options.
- **Math:** The number of answer choices will be reduced from five to four, simplifying the decision-making process for students.

According to the [ACT's official website](#), these changes reflect the "ACT's commitment to responding to feedback from learners, educators, and higher education institutions. The updates aim to reduce test anxiety, enhance the quality of the assessment, and align better with students' needs."

- **Experimental Section Removed:** The fifth section has been eliminated for National Test Dates.
- **Practice Materials:** Updated resources will be available to help students prepare for these changes; anticipated release of these materials: mid-May, 2025

Implementation Timeline

- **April 2025:** First National **Online** Testing with the option to include or exclude Science. **Paper and pencil option** will remain in the **current** format
- **September 2025:** All testers will receive the new test structure, with an option for paper on online

What Stays the Same:

- **Score Release:** 85% of students receive scores within 10-11 days.
- The paper testing option will remain available for students who prefer traditional formats.
- The essay will continue to be optional, with updated prompts to reflect argumentative writing skills.

What this means for STUDENTS:

These changes seem to reflect a "win" for students, offering greater flexibility, reduced testing time, and enhanced scoring options. However, students will need to better navigate testing decisions. Students will need to understand if their targeted schools (or major) will require the science score even though the ACT has made it optional.

***For the class of 2026, please assume that the Science is required and "opt in" to take this portion of the test. Additionally, students should stick with the current PAPER format because it will allow students to leverage the pencil and paper hacks they have been practicing; it has established prep resources, and it avoids the risks associated with being among the first to navigate a new format.

For more details, see initial info on next page and visit the [ACT's official website](#)



July, 2024

The ACT is Changing: GREAT news for Class of 2027

There's more exciting news in the world of standardized testing: The [ACT recently announced that it, too, will undergo](#) major changes, all designed to give students flexibility and options. First, the ACT will transition to a shortened format, and second, students will have the choice to opt out of the Science section.

What's changing?

The "New*" ACT will have 3 sections: English, Reading, and Math. Like the writing section, the ACT science section will be optional in the new format (the writing section was made optional in 2021). Without the science, the ACT will be an hour shorter (in line with the length of the new digital SAT). Additionally, students will be thrilled to find shorter English and Reading passages and 44 fewer questions, overall. The resulting format will provide more time per question, which should ease the ACT's frenetic pace that has traditionally frustrated students.

Minutes per section	Current* ACT	Anticipated *New ACT	Anticipated New ACT + Science
English	45	35	35
Math	60	50	50
Reading	35	40	40
Science	35		45
Total:	2 hours +55 minutes	2 hours + 5 minutes	2 hours +50 minutes

- **The ACT format through July 2025 will be referred to as the "Current" ACT.*
- *The ACT that is anticipated to be launched in September, 2025 will be referred to as the "New ACT."*

Questions Per Section	Current ACT	Anticipated New ACT	Increase in time per question
English	75	50	17%
Math	60	45	12%
Reading	40	36	28%
Science	40		29%
Total:	2 hours +55 minutes	2 hours + 5 minutes	2 hours +50 minutes

How will the New ACT be scored?

Each section score will remain on the 1–36 scale. The new Composite score will be the average of the English, Reading, and Math scores. The optional Science test will be presented as a separate score. It is unknown if a student who takes the Science will have the option to hold back on reporting the Science to schools. This is not possible with the current Writing test score.

The new test will be BOTH in a digital and paper based version

- **For the national test day in April 2025**, the new format will be introduced for only the DIGITAL version. The online format will not, however, be universally available.
- **For the national test day in Sept 2025**, the New ACT will roll out in the paper version.
- **Staying the same:**
 - the 2025 paper test for Feb, April, June and July will be the CURRENT ACT (w/ science)
 - in –school testing will remain with the current version until Spring of 2026.

Lots of options:

Students will eventually be able to choose to take a paper or an online form of the New ACT, the New ACT plus Science, the New ACT plus writing, or the New ACT plus Science and Writing (NOTE: Very few colleges or universities require the writing portion, and we recommend that students opt against.).



Lots of questions come to mind:

- Will the New ACT be easier or more difficult than the current Classic ACT?
- How much shorter are the reading passages? How many are there?
- How much shorter are the English passages? How many are there?
- Are the number of math **topics** being trimmed?
- Will the test be as reliable and predictive?
- Will students be able to super score across the New and the Current format?
- When will new practice materials be released? Will current materials be relevant?
- Will schools accept the new ACT?
- Will schools still require the Science despite the section being optional?
 - Or, will just the competitive colleges still require the Science?
 - Or, will some college majors within Universities still require the Science?
- Will the number of test centers that offer the ACT digital be expanded?
- Will the online version of the new ACT be linear or adaptive?

We are all awaiting more details from the ACT!

One thing is for sure:

The staggered rollout may cause initial confusion and inconsistent policies across campuses and even within universities' different colleges. As always, students will have to carefully navigate their different targeted schools' policies with these specific changes in mind.

What does this mean for students today?

A move towards a shorter test with more time per question sounds like a win for students! The ACT is following the College Board's lead, offering a more student-friendly test that is shorter, and offers more time per question. However, the planned rollout is likely not going to have much impact on the Class of 2026.

Students in the Class of 2026 should plan to continue to the CURRENT TEST in the PAPER form, with the ACT Science test portion. As of now, no colleges have announced that the science is optional. However, students should NOT take the optional WRITING section unless they happen to be applying to one of the 8 colleges in the country that still require it.

Students in the Class of 2027 (and younger) should have more information by the time decisions need to be made. It will be interesting to see how colleges respond to the new ACT, which may require an adjustment period as admissions offices seek to parse what the new scores mean. Testing trends in the 2026-27 admissions cycle will likely shape the way that colleges regard the test and its rigor.