RAISE YOUR SCORE
TIPS FOR SUCCESS ON THE ACT AND SAT

Doorway to College Foundation

ZAPS
FOCUSED TEST PREP

3106 Rochester Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52245 | 877-927-8378 | www.doorway.college.org

You've been studying for months. You know your vocabulary flashcards front and back. You're doing open-ended math problems in your sleep. But, are you ready for test day?

The days and weeks leading up to test day are stressful and nerve-wracking, but walking into your ACT or SAT testing center with frayed nerves would be a disaster — why set yourself up for failure? Everyone has a unique approach to standardized testing, but here are a few tips to help you enter the room confident and leave proud of your performance.

"If you think you can or think you can't, you're right."

Henry Ford was right. One of the biggest mistakes test-takers make is letting their nerves get the best of them. A confident, positive mindset does wonders for reducing anxiety, and it's just as important as studying.

Your mind needs to be calm, cool and collected. Instead of thinking about the difficulty of the test or what could go wrong, focus on how well prepared you are, how hard you've been studying and how it will all pay off when you're in the testing room.

"If you don't take control of the game, your opponent will."

In the case of the ACT and SAT, your opponent happens to be the test writers. No, they're not mean people who sit around thinking up ways to torture you. But they do expect you to follow their lead in how you approach the test — even though their way may not be to your advantage. Don't let them decide for you.

The order in which you approach sections of these tests can help or hinder your progress and your score. Find out the best way to tackle each subtest by learning from the experts who know. An experienced test specialist will be able to advise you on how to use your personal strengths to make your own game plan — and win big on the ACT or SAT.

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"Winners never quit and quitters never win."

If your preparation has paid off, you'll be surprised at how easy the test seems. When you're nearing the end with lots of time left, remember this: Extra time is a gift. Do not hand the test in early; quitting early means you're giving up valuable time you could be using to go back and check your answers.

Even if you're confident in your answers, check your work for mistakes. You'll likely find a question that you answered incorrectly — if you quit early, you won't have the chance to fix it.

"Strength of mind is exercise, not rest."

In the days leading up to the test, it's important to keep yourself healthy. That means getting a good night's sleep, eating healthy meals, keeping hydrated and staying active. Don't let yourself get lazy — continue toning your mind and your body to prepare for test day.

The night before the test, go to bed early. Wake up with enough time so you're not in crisis mode before you leave for the test. Most important, have a healthy and filling breakfast. Don't be your own obstacle — taking care of your mind and body ensures that you won't be standing in the way of your own success while you're taking the test.

"To do two things at once is to neither well."

One helpful test-taking strategy is to finish one page at a time. Work all the problems on one page, then transfer the answers to your bubble sheet. Going back and forth between the test and the answer sheet wastes time, and it opens up plenty of chances to make mistakes. When you have a full page of the test complete and the answers have been filled in correctly, you're ready to move on to the next page.

"Until we can manage time, we can manage nothing else."

Time management is a skill that needs honing, and different standardized tests require special time-management strategies. Knowing how to manage your time for specific sections of a test is essential for doing your best. ACT and SAT prep courses include time management coaching as an integral part of the class, making the difference between a mediocre score and one to be proud of.

When it comes to the ACT and SAT, having the knowledge isn't enough. You need to demonstrate your skills and intelligence by answering questions strategically and taking educated guesses when you're not sure of the correct answer. These tactics do not come naturally, but an ACT or SAT prep course is designed to refine your skills, helping you become a better test-taker.

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

Ben Franklin may not have used this tip to take a college admissions test, but it's useful advice just the same. Never enter the testing room unprepared. This, of course, includes studying the material as thoroughly as possible. But, preparing for the test also means knowing what to expect in regard to question format, directions and timing.

Taking an ACT or SAT practice test (or multiple tests) helps you experience what the test will truly be like on the big day. The instructions and layout of the practice test mimic that of the real test. Instead of wasting your time reading through the instructions on the day of the exam, you walk in knowing what to expect.

The ACT and SAT are big deals, and you shouldn't take them lightly. Yet, stress and worry only make the experience (and your performance) worse. Attend an ACT or SAT prep course — live or online — and familiarize yourself with ACT or SAT practice tests. Finally, make sure you're engaging in a healthy lifestyle for both body and mind.

For more tips and suggestions to ensure the best possible outcome on test day, contact the ACT and SAT prep experts at Doorway To College.

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