

# ACT Writing FAQs

This page contains the answers to the most frequently asked questions about the ACT writing test. Check here for quick answers to most questions.

**Q. Is the writing section required?**

A. All 11<sup>th</sup> grade students who are taking the ACT during the 2017-2018 spring testing window (Feb/March 2018) will be taking the writing portion of the test.

**Q. How long is the writing section?**

A. The writing section is 40 minutes long and consists of 1 writing prompt. The writing section is timed.

**Q. If we are administering the standard sections of the ACT on paper, can students complete the writing portion online?**

A. No. You cannot mix testing modes by student. If you are doing paper testing, your students will complete the writing portion on paper. If you are doing online testing, your students will complete the writing portion online.

**Q. What happens if a student doesn't complete the writing portion of the test?**

A. If a student doesn't complete the writing portion, he or she will not get an English Language Arts score, but he or she will get a composite English score if there were no testing security or other test irregularity concerns.

**Q. Is the extended break between the standard ACT sections and the writing section optional or required?**

A. The extended break is optional by school. Schools can select to participate, or to not participate. It is not optional by room or testing area – only on a whole school or testing site basis.

**Q. What is the ACT writing test?**

From the ACT Technical Manual Supplement (2017), 1.11, “The ACT writing test is a 40-minute essay test that measures students’ writing skills – specifically those skills emphasized in high school English classes and in entry-level college composition courses. The information from the writing test tells postsecondary institutions about students’ ability to think critically about an issue, consider different perspectives on it, and compose an effective argumentative essay in a timed condition. . . . Students are asked to read the prompt and write an essay in which they develop their own perspective on the issue. The essay must analyze the relationship between their own perspective and one or more other perspectives. Student may adopt one of the perspectives given in the prompt as their own, or they may introduce one that is completely different from those given. Their score will not be affected by the point of view they take on the issue.”

**Q. How does ACT writing scoring work?**

There are four test domains in ACT writing: Ideas & Analysis, Development & Support, Organization, and Language & Conventions. Two trained readers score each essay on a scale from 1 – 6 in each of the four domains. Each domain score is a sum of the two readers’ scores using the analytic rubric. If the readers’ ratings disagree by more than one point, a third reader evaluates the essay and resolves the discrepancy.

**Q. Where can I find more information about the writing test and how is it scored?**

A. You can find the writing rubric and detailed information about the writing test on the ACT website [ACT Writing Test Prep](http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation/writing-test-prep.html) (<http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation/writing-test-prep.html>) and in the [ACT Technical Manual Supplement](http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/ACT-Technical-Manual-Supplement.pdf) (<http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/ACT-Technical-Manual-Supplement.pdf>).