

ACT Overview- FAQ

Overview ACT information:

State ACT Testing is for all juniors in public school in Utah. The Spring 2020 ACT is comprised of reading, English (grammar and usage), math, and science subtests. These tests provide scores that predict the likelihood that students will attain a grade of “C” or better in a college entry-level course. For example, the science sub-test score predicts the likelihood a student is prepared to achieve a “C” or better in an entry-level college biology class. The ACT is not a knowledge test, but rather, is a test of critical thinking, problem solving, reading comprehension, and higher-level thinking skills that are important indicators of preparation for college and career.

The state ACT test administration results in the following scores for students:

- ACT composite (average of math, English, reading and science)
- ACT sub test scores (individual scores for each subtest component – i.e., math score, science score, English score, reading score).
- ACT STEM score (combination of science and math)

Parents can find more information about the ACT and scores by going to [ACT information for students and parents](https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act.html) (https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act.html)

Who is eligible to take the state-funded ACT?

Students who are *enrolled* as juniors in a public high school, or students who are homeschooled who would be a junior by birthdate if they were enrolled in their public high school are eligible to take the state-funded ACT. Students may only take the state-funded ACT one time.

Note: Homeschooled students who desire to take the ACT must contact the school district in which they would like to test to request the district’s policy for testing students who are not enrolled. In order for homeschooled students to participate in the state-funded 11th grade ACT, parents must make arrangements according to the deadlines and requirements as described in the school district’s U-PASS policy for participation.

What does the ACT measure?

- Long-term academic skills (as opposed to end-of course knowledge)
- Higher order analytical skills
- Problem solving skills
- Complex reading skills
- Data analysis skills
- Attention to details (ACT, 2019)

When are Utah’s Spring 2020 ACT State Testing dates for 11th grade students?

Utah School Districts select testing dates from the following options.

2020 Paper Testing Dates

- Standard (Paper): March 3, 2020

- Accommodations (Paper): March 3-6, & 9-13
- Standard (Paper): March 24, 2020
- Accommodations (Paper): March 24-27, 30-31, & April 1-3
- Standard (Paper): April 7, 2020
- Accommodations (Paper): April 7-10 & 13-17

Paper testing window for students with accommodations

2019 Online Testing Dates

- Online standard & accommodations: March 3 – 5 & 10 -12
- Online standard & accommodations: March 24 – 26, & March 31 – April 2
- Online standard & accommodations: April 7-9 & 14-16

How can students take the ACT on national test dates?

High School students can register and pay for the test through ACT.org to take a test on one of the national test dates. Students can take the ACT more than once through national testing, though it is the student's responsibility to arrange and pay for such testing. National testing is separate from state testing and the funding is not interchangeable. Students do not have to be juniors to take the national ACT test (see [ACT.org](https://act.org) for more information).

How can students prepare for the ACT?

The state has purchased licenses for all public high school students in Utah to access the ACT Prep tool, Shmoop. Students can create an account for Shmoop through their school.

You can find information on Shmoop here: [Utah's Shmoop site](https://schools.shmoop.com/utah/) (https://schools.shmoop.com/utah/)

Students can also find practice tests and review information through [Utah Futures](https://utahfutures.org/) (https://utahfutures.org/). However, the most important (and most effective) preparation is consistent, high-quality, high-rigor Core standards-based instruction.

Research indicates that:

- Spending *class time* on test prep instead of high quality Core instruction does not make students more prepared for the ACT,
- Key components of successful preparation for the ACT that result in improved student outcomes include a challenging academic atmosphere, demanding academic curriculum, college prep attitude and environment for *all* students, development of critical thinking skills, positive school atmosphere, and a high student on-task rate (University of Chicago Urban Education Institute, 2008).

How are ACT test scores used in Utah high school accountability?

The ACT is not used to measure Utah's Core academic standards for 11th grade students – it is part of the Postsecondary Readiness Indicator. The ACT is designed to measure skills like critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning that transfer to college and career, as well as predict the likelihood of student success in 1st year college coursework. The Postsecondary Readiness Indicator takes into account the percentage of students who achieve an 18 on the ACT (composite score), graduation rates, and the percentage of students who participate in

advanced-level coursework (including AP, IB, CE, and CTE pathways). To find out more about school accountability in Utah, please visit the Utah State Board of Education's [Accountability Webpage](https://www.schools.utah.gov/assessment/resources?mid=1171&tid=0) (<https://www.schools.utah.gov/assessment/resources?mid=1171&tid=0>).

References:

ACT. (2019). *Technical manual*. Retrieved from http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/ACT_Technical_Manual.pdf

University of Chicago Urban Education Institute. (2008). *ACT Test Prep - More is Not Better*.

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