About the Authors

Stephanie Moody is an English and writing teacher who has taken her 11 years in the classroom teaching strategies and techniques for standardized testing in both ACT and SAT and put her experience into this book on the ACT. A 1997 graduate from Florida State University with a degree in English Education and Writing, she has spent her career gathering research and techniques from books and the students themselves, applying theory with application and creating a unique hybrid that students both enjoy and easily understand. She holds endorsements in Gifted and ESOL education and has served on several committees in research and testing since beginning in the classroom in 1998. Stephanie is a Plato certified instructor for Genius 360°, Inc. teaching courses in MCAT, GRE, SAT, and ACT over the last several years with great success. Currently an Education Coordinator and Program Director for Genius 360°, Inc., she studies the trends in testing and education as well as those within the schools to develop curriculum and training that students can use to truly achieve on college entrance exams.

Patrick Storey is a science teacher with seven years of classroom experience. As a graduate from the University of Florida with a degree in Microbiology and Chemistry, he began research at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, FL, and later continued his education at the University of South Florida College of Medicine. During his academic career, Patrick has mentored countless students, developing individualized education plans to help students comprehend and utilize their skills. He has researched standardized test methods, particularly the MCAT and ACT, to help students maximize their test performance. Incorporating his knowledge, background, and educational style, he focuses on student achievement through test-skills mastery instead of the old-school approach of teaching content only. Patrick currently teaches at Middleton Magnet High School in Tampa, FL, teaching Honors and Advanced Placement classes in biology, anatomy, and environmental science. He is also an instructor and author for Genius 360°, Inc. teaching primarily the MCAT and other postgraduate courses.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Welcome to The Genius Guide to the ACT. We are glad that you have chosen Genius 360° to help you prepare for the ACT. Many components need to be taken into consideration prior to taking the actual test. By using our book and the simple strategies we employ in combination with the practice materials and easy to understand formatted section by section analysis, you will go to the test with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed and get the score you deserve. Study hard, and enjoy the ACT journey!

Now that you have decided that you are going to take the ACT, you may have questions and concerns about what will be asked of you and what you really need to know. This is where we come in. Throughout the book, we will address the most commonly asked questions about the test and show you the types of questions you can expect to see on the test. Most importantly, we will equip you with strategies to use the knowledge you already have to master each section of the test.

What Is the ACT?

The ACT is a test that was developed in the 1950's and began administration in 1960. The purpose of the test is to help students show achievement within specific areas of study to highlight students' greatest overall strengths as well as to give students a venue to show subject area knowledge. The test itself is broken down into five separate sections including English, math, reading, science, and an optional writing section.

How Does the ACT Differ from the SAT?

It is easy to look at both the ACT and the SAT and ask yourself, "What is the difference?" On the surface, both tests appear similar, perhaps because they are the two standardized exams that most universities accept as part of a student's admissions application. But that is where the similarities end. The tests themselves, how they are set up, and even the subjects they address are quite different.

The SAT is an aptitude test that focuses on a student's abilities in three areas of assessment: math, verbal, and writing. Within the math section, various concepts are engaged including algebra, geometry, data analysis, statistics, and probability. The second area of assessment is the verbal section, which includes sentence completion, multiple choice questions, and passage type questions. The third section, the writing section, asks the student to write a short essay based on an assigned topic.

The ACT, however, is an achievement test developed to showcase what a student has learned in four distinct areas: English, math, reading, science. The ACT includes an optional fifth area that measures writing. The English area measures knowledge of mechanics and rhetoric skills. The mathematics test includes algebra, geometry, and some trigonometry. The reading section tests comprehension and interpretive skills in both fiction and non-fiction passages. The fourth section, science, focuses on data, research, and conflicting viewpoints. The final assessment is the optional written essay. Although the writing portion of the exam is optional, we encourage students to complete this portion as it is an opportunity for a student to show that he or she is able to formulate a thought and produce writing that is clear, consistent, and concise.

Simply put, the ACT focuses on the overall knowledge, understanding, and skill level of the student whereas the SAT focuses more on the student's knowledge of subjects in specific genres and skill sets.

How Is the ACT Broken Down?

As mentioned above, the test itself is divided into five sections. Each section of the test is timed and varies in length and number of questions asked. Below is a chart that tells you all you need to know about the test, how it is compiled, and what categories are included.

Subject	# of Questions	Time Allotted	Areas Covered
English	75	45 minutes	Usage & Mechanics (40) Rhetorical Skills (35)
Math	60	60 minutes	Algebra (33) Geometry (23) Trigonometry (4)
Reading	40	35 minutes	Fiction (10) Non-Fiction (30)
Science	40	35 minutes	Data (13) Research (14) Viewpoints (13)
Writing	1 prompt	30 minutes	Basic and Advanced Writing Skills

How Is the ACT Scored?

The composite score is the score reported to colleges and universities. The composite score is the average of the individual scores on each of the four subject area tests: English, math, reading, and science. Each of these subject area tests is recorded on a scale of 1-36.

Some of the ACT scores have subscores. A subscore is the number given to each area covered within a given subject area test. These scores are recorded on a scale of 1-18. A student will receive seven subscores from each of the subject areas of English, math, and reading. Science does not have a subscore.

On each one of the subject areas, the test is evaluated based on the number of questions a test taker answers correctly. Based on that number, a scaled score is determined and receives a composite score of 1-36. It is from the culmination of these scores that the average is calculated to form the final score.

What Is a Good Score on the ACT?

This is a more difficult question to answer because it is going to vary from student to student, school to school, and year to year. Recently, the national average has hovered around 21.2 out of a possible 36, but again, it is important to understand that the ACT is designed to show what you know within different subjects, so a higher score within a certain subject area can help to balance a weaker score in another area. When you receive your score report, you will also see that your score will be placed and interpreted within the national ranking of all students who have taken the test. What this means is that you are shown exactly where you rank against everyone else who took the test; thus, you are better able understand your score in relation to the scores of your competition. Additionally, your scores are shown for each of the subject areas, so you are able to see your strengths and weaknesses, giving you information that you may use as you decide what field to study in college.

How Are the ACT Scores Reported to Institutions?

When you register to take the test, you decide which schools will receive your scores. You can request that your scores be sent to schools you would like to attend, colleges that you have applied to, and/or schools you are considering. If these decisions have not yet been made, you can, for a fee, send your scores to the schools you choose after the exam is completed, and you have seen how well you performed. You will receive your scores for English, math, reading, and science within about 2-3 weeks online and in the mail as a full score report within 3-8 weeks. The writing portion of the exam, if you choose to take it, will be sent in a separate score report after the required scores are reported (about two weeks behind the original scores).

Other Important Information You Need to Know before Taking the Test?

Here are just a few things you will want to be aware of before beginning your ACT journey:

- The test is given six times a year, and you must preregister to be eligible.
- The fee for taking the ACT without the writing is $33.00 and $48.00 with the writing.
- If you miss the deadline for registration for the testing date you would like, you can sign up as a standby student for an additional fee of $41.00, but this does not guarantee a seat on test day.
- You can take the test as many times as you would like and only report those scores you want seen by institutions.
- Be sure on test day that you are prepared with pencils, a watch, your calculator, and some type of identification. It is always a good idea to also bring a sweatshirt or sweater in the event the test center is cold. Remember, you are going to be testing for 3-4 hours. Think ahead…it helps!

CHAPTER 2

The Essentials

As we mentioned earlier, the ACT is intended to measure a student's achievement. What is the best part about that for you? You do not need to learn any new content to prepare for this test because you already have the background knowledge to answer most of the questions the test is going to ask. By reviewing skills, strategies, and formulas you already know, you should be able to choose the right answer to any given question. And we are here to make sure you answer as many questions correctly as possible. This book is intended to be used in three ways: review, application, and practice. Our approach to the test is different because we write about the test in words that make sense. Our book is written in a logical way that follows the patterns you will encounter on the actual test.

Let's take a look at the three ways we want you to approach studying for the test.

Review

Review is what this is all about. We are reviewing skills that you have acquired throughout your career as a student. We are not attempting to teach you new material because that is not going to increase your score. What is going to increase your subject area score is knowing and reviewing those strategies and skill-sets that you have not used in a while or maybe have forgotten over time. Our method to helping you earn a higher score is simple: concept, definition, incorrect, correct, and practice with explanation. That's it.

Application

Once you have reviewed the topic and concept, practice what you have reviewed. We provide a pre-diagnostic test at the beginning of the book and mini-mastery tests at the end of each subject area so that you can see and compare your scores before and after studying the subject. By using the practice questions throughout the section in conjunction with the definitions and tips, you will see an improvement in the overall application process.

Practice

The truth is that if you want to be prepared for the test and earn a high score, you need to practice; there is just no way to get around it. We have provided several areas in the book for this important component. After going through each section and completing the practice examples, we challenge you to take the full-length practice test at the back of the book. We have tried to simulate the look of the actual test, including the test's layout, the directions, and the time allowances. Once you are finished, we provide an answer and explanation section for you to check yourself and calculate your score.