
Hearn Consulting · Workbook

The ACT English & Reading Workbook.

Targeted ACT English and ACT Reading practice with answer review, Error Log Template routines, and pacing work.

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How to use this workbook.

This Workbook is the practice companion to The ACT Playbook.

The Playbook helps you understand ACT English and ACT Reading, read official ACT baseline results, and choose the next practice priority. This Workbook gives you targeted practice in the English and Reading skills that actually move the score: sentence structure, punctuation, usage, rhetoric, central idea, evidence, inference, structure, and vocabulary in context.

Important

Do not use this Workbook as the official baseline.

Use official ACT materials for baseline, scoring, full-length timing, and current format details.

Use this Workbook to practice the skills the official test shows you need.

After each practice set

Do not just mark the score. Review the misses.

For each missed or guessed question, record the question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move in the Error Log Template.

If you cannot explain the miss, the question is not reviewed yet.

What this workbook makes visible.

Most ACT practice fails because the student finishes questions but does not understand the pattern.

This Workbook is designed to make the pattern visible:

- Is the miss an English-rule issue, Reading-comprehension issue, trap-answer issue, pacing issue, or passage-habit issue?
- Is the student losing points mostly in English or Reading?
- Is the student reading the whole sentence/passage, or reacting to answer choices too quickly?
- Is the same miss type repeating across practice sets?
- Is timing breaking the method?

In 1:1 work, these patterns guide the next session.

What to look for after a week of work

Do not judge progress by a single practice score. Look for better patterns:

- Fewer repeated miss types.
- Faster recognition of English grammar rules.
- Clearer central-idea statements on Reading items.
- Better pacing across the two sections.
- More specific next steps after practice.

The score matters, but the score is a lagging indicator. The first sign of progress is usually better review.

The ACT English & Reading path.

Ten lessons. Adjust pacing to your timeline. Do not skip the review steps.

| Lesson | Focus |
|--------|--|
| 1 | Skill Check + Comprehension-First Protocol |
| 2 | English Conventions I — sentence structure, formation, punctuation between clauses |
| 3 | English Conventions II — usage (agreement, pronouns, modifiers, idioms) |
| 4 | English Production of Writing + Knowledge of Language |
| 5 | Midpoint timed English + Reading warm-up |
| 6 | Reading — Key Ideas & Details |
| 7 | Reading — Craft & Structure |
| 8 | Reading — Integration of Knowledge & Ideas |
| 9 | English Knowledge of Language + pacing drills |
| 10 | Full timed set + test-day strategy |

How to use this path

Work the lessons in order the first time through. The English foundations in Lessons 2–4 carry into the timed work later, and the Reading sequence in Lessons 6–8 builds the same way. Use Lesson 5 as a midpoint check before moving on. If you have less time than the full ten lessons need, hold the order but tighten the practice sets — do not skip the review steps, since the review is where the score moves.

Pair every lesson with the Error Log Template. The lesson tells you what to practice; the log tells you what you actually need to fix.

The method.

Comprehension-First Protocol

On ACT English: read the full sentence (or full paragraph for rhetorical-skills items) before evaluating choices. ACT English rewards reading the sentence, not just reading the underlined portion.

On ACT Reading: run the Three-Question Read before going to the items.

1. What is the central idea?
2. How does the author support it?
3. How is the passage structured?

Answers come from the passage, not from the choices. The choices are designed to seed meaning. Your read is your anchor.

Read the sentence (English)

On Conventions and Knowledge-of-Language items, read the full sentence before evaluating the underlined portion. Many wrong choices look fine when read in isolation; they fail when read against the surrounding sentence.

The principle

You do not need every question right. You need disciplined accuracy, good pacing decisions, and a review process that changes the next set.

Lesson 1

Skill Check + Comprehension-First Protocol.

Establish a starting practice pattern. Install the Comprehension-First rule. The skill check items below do not replace an official ACT baseline — they help identify the patterns to practice first.

What this lesson covers

- A short skill check in ACT English and ACT Reading.
- The Comprehension-First Protocol.
- The category maps for English and Reading.

Method — Comprehension-First Protocol

On ACT English, the underlined portion alone is rarely enough. Read the full sentence — or the full paragraph for rhetorical-skills items — before evaluating any choice.

On ACT Reading: run the Three-Question Read before going to the items.

1. What is the central idea?
2. How does the author support it?
3. How is the passage structured?

ACT English categories

- Production of Writing — topic development, organization, unity, cohesion.
- Knowledge of Language — word choice, style, register, concision.
- Conventions of Standard English — sentence structure, punctuation, usage.

ACT Reading categories

- Key Ideas & Details — central idea, evidence, inference.
- Craft & Structure — words in context, function, point of view.
- Integration of Knowledge & Ideas — compare passages, argument analysis.

ACT English skill check

Read the full passage; then evaluate each numbered choice in context.

Passage sentence: "The annual report, [1] released in March, was praised by analysts; the company's [2] revenue was up by 14 percent and net income [3] are up 8 percent."

[1] Choose the option that is conventional in context.

- (A) released in March,
- (B) released, in March,
- (C) released in March
- (D) released in March;
- (E) released in March:

[2] Choose the most concise alternative.

- (A) revenue was up by 14 percent
- (B) revenue, having gone up by 14 percent,
- (C) revenue increased by an amount equal to 14 percent
- (D) the level of revenue went up by 14 percent
- (E) revenue had gone up, by 14 percent

[3] Choose the option conventional with the subject.

- (A) are up 8 percent
- (B) is up 8 percent
- (C) being up 8 percent
- (D) have been up 8 percent
- (E) are at 8 percent up

ACT Reading skill check

Passage: "The role of fungi in forest ecosystems was, for most of the past century, treated as a secondary concern. Recent work has revised that picture. The mycorrhizal networks that connect tree roots across an entire forest move water, nutrients, and chemical signals among individual trees. Trees in the same stand share carbon when one is shaded; sugars flow from canopy adults to seedlings. Old field-measurement protocols miss most of this activity. Newer protocols, which take soil sampling and isotope tracing seriously, will not always reverse the older conclusions, but they will increasingly make them feel like a partial picture."

Item 1 — Central idea

Which statement best captures the central idea of the passage?

- (A) Old field protocols are correct in every respect.
- (B) Mycorrhizal networks connect trees in ways that older measurement protocols miss, and newer protocols will make older conclusions feel like a partial picture.
- (C) Forests are largely independent collections of individual trees.
- (D) Soil sampling is no more reliable than canopy measurement.
- (E) Fungi are the most important organisms in any forest.

Item 2 — Evidence

Which sentence most directly supports the claim that newer work is not a wholesale rejection of older work?

- (A) "The role of fungi ... was treated as a secondary concern."
- (B) "Recent work has revised that picture."
- (C) "Trees in the same stand share carbon..."
- (D) "Newer protocols, which take soil sampling and isotope tracing seriously, will not always reverse the older conclusions..."
- (E) "Old field-measurement protocols miss most of this activity."

Item 3 — Inference

Which inference is most strongly supported?

- (A) Future field-ecology protocols are likely to incorporate soil sampling and isotope tracing more than older protocols did.
- (B) Tree-ring data is no longer useful.
- (C) Fungi are now the most important organisms in any forest.
- (D) Older field ecologists were dishonest.
- (E) Soil networks are unrelated to forest health.

Item 4 — Function

The phrase "will increasingly make them feel like a partial picture" most directly serves to:

- (A) reject the older conclusions entirely.
- (B) signal that newer protocols will complement, not replace, older work.
- (C) describe a specific experimental protocol.
- (D) introduce a new line of evidence.
- (E) summarize the structure of the passage.

Answer key + rationale

English [1]: (A). The comma after "March" closes the nonrestrictive phrase "released in March," which is the conventional punctuation.

English [2]: (A). The most concise option. (B), (C), (D), (E) add words without changing meaning.

English [3]: (B) is. The subject is "net income," singular. (A), (D), (E) treat it as plural; (C) is a participle.

Reading 1: (B). Direct paraphrase of the central claim. (A), (C), (D), (E) reverse or overstate.

Reading 2: (D). Names "not always reverse the older conclusions."

Reading 3: (A). The passage describes newer protocols as taking soil sampling and isotope tracing seriously. (B), (C), (D), (E) overreach.

Reading 4: (B). The phrase signals refinement, not rejection. (A), (D), (E) misread function; (C) is unrelated.

After each practice set

Do not just mark the score. Review the misses.

For each missed or guessed question, record the question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move in the Error Log Template.

If you cannot explain the miss, the question is not reviewed yet.

Error Log check

Record missed or guessed questions in the Error Log Template. Pay special attention to question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move.

End-of-lesson reflection

- One thing that clicked:
- One thing I still do not understand:
- What I will drill before the next lesson:

Lesson 2

English Conventions I – sentence structure, formation, and punctuation between clauses.

Most ACT English items in Conventions test whether you can recognize a complete sentence and punctuate the relationship between clauses correctly.

What this lesson covers

- Recognizing complete sentences vs. fragments.
- Comma splices and fused sentences.
- Comma + coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) between sentences.
- Semicolons, colons, and em-dashes.

Method – quick test

For any item that changes punctuation between two pieces of text, ask: Is each side a complete sentence?

1. If yes, use a period, semicolon, or comma + FANBOYS.
2. If only one side is complete, use a comma alone (or, for the introductory case, comma after the dependent clause).
3. If neither side is complete, no punctuation is usually needed.

Decision table

| Left side | Right side | Use |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Complete sentence | Complete sentence | Period, semicolon, or comma + and/but/or/so/for/yet/nor |
| Complete sentence | List, definition, or elaboration | Colon |
| Complete sentence | Nonrestrictive interruption | Paired commas or paired em-dashes |
| Dependent clause / phrase | Complete sentence | Comma after the dependent piece |
| Complete sentence | Dependent clause / phrase | Usually no comma |

Practice set

1.

"The deadline was Friday _____ the team filed early."

- (A) ,
- (B) ;
- (C) :
- (D) and
- (E) no punctuation

2.

"The committee deliberated for three weeks _____ ultimately, it issued a unanimous recommendation."

- (A) ,
- (B) ;
- (C) :
- (D) —
- (E) and

3.

"The fellowship lasts twelve months _____ each fellow is expected to publish at least one essay in that time."

- (A) ,
- (B) ;
- (C) :
- (D) — but
- (E) and

4.

"Despite a strong start _____ the season ended with three consecutive losses."

- (A) ,
- (B) ;
- (C) :
- (D) —
- (E) no punctuation

5.

"The artist _____ who had spent five years in residence at the institute _____ returned to her studio outside Boston."

- (A) , —
 - (B) , ,
 - (C) — —
 - (D) ; ;
-

-
- (E) : :

6.

"The campaign included three planks _____ improving public transit, expanding library hours, and reforming local zoning rules."

- (A) ,
- (B) ;
- (C) :
- (D) — and
- (E) no punctuation

7.

"The proposal had three components _____ a curriculum review, a staff retreat, and a published report."

- (A) ,
- (B) ;
- (C) :
- (D) — and
- (E) no punctuation

8.

"The detective's reports were valued for their economy _____ no flourishes, no speculation, only what could be documented."

- (A) ,
- (B) ;
- (C) :
- (D) —
- (E) and

Answer key + rationale

1. (B) semicolon. Two complete sentences.
2. (B) semicolon. Two complete sentences ("three weeks" closes the first; "ultimately, it issued..." is complete).
3. (B) semicolon. Two complete sentences.
4. (A) comma. Introductory phrase + complete sentence.
5. (B) , , (paired commas) or (C) — — (paired em-dashes). Both correctly set off the nonrestrictive clause. (A), (D), (E) mismatch.
6. (C) colon. Complete sentence + list of three items.
7. (C) colon. Complete sentence + list.

8. (C) colon. Complete sentence + elaboration.

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Error Log check

Record missed or guessed questions in the Error Log Template. Pay special attention to question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Where do I confuse comma and semicolon?
- Do I check both sides of the punctuation for completeness?
- Which rule needs the most repetition this week?

Lesson 3**English Conventions II — usage.**

Agreement, pronouns, modifiers, and idioms — the second cluster of ACT English Conventions items.

What this lesson covers

- Subject-verb agreement.
- Pronoun reference and number.
- Modifier placement.
- Idiomatic prepositions.

Practice set**1. Subject-verb**

"The collection of letters, scattered across three archives in two countries, _____ never been gathered in a single edition."

- (A) have
- (B) has
- (C) having
- (D) had had
- (E) is

2. Subject-verb

"Neither the senator nor her staff _____ commented on the report."

- (A) have
- (B) has
- (C) is
- (D) having
- (E) were

3. Pronoun reference

"When the manager met with the new staff, _____ explained the priorities for the quarter."

- (A) they
- (B) she
- (C) it
- (D) one
- (E) the priorities

4. Pronoun number

"Although the committee and the council disagreed about the budget, _____ ultimately approved the same allocation."

- (A) they
- (B) it
- (C) he
- (D) one
- (E) that

5. Modifier

"Hurrying to finish before sunset, _____ "

- (A) the path was unclear to the hikers.
- (B) it was unclear which path to take.
- (C) the hikers could not see the path clearly.
- (D) the trail markers were missed by the hikers.
- (E) being missed by the hikers, the trail markers were unclear.

6. Modifier

"Originally designed for industrial use, _____ "

- (A) the engineer adapted the device for household kitchens.
- (B) household kitchens are now where the device is used.
- (C) the device was adapted for household kitchens.
- (D) the adaptation was done by the engineer.
- (E) for household kitchens, the adaptation was done.

7. Idiom

"The team's strategy was different _____ what they had used the previous season."

- (A) than
- (B) from
- (C) to
- (D) with
- (E) for

8. Idiom

"She has a deep interest _____ marine biology."

- (A) on
 - (B) for
 - (C) in
 - (D) about
-

- (E) with

Answer key + rationale

1. (B) has. The subject is "the collection," singular.
2. (B) has. "Neither / nor" agrees with the closer subject — "her staff," singular collective.
3. (B) she. Pronoun refers to the manager (singular).
4. (A) they. Two subjects (committee, council) → plural pronoun.
5. (C). The introductory phrase modifies the hikers; only (C) makes that the subject of the main clause.
6. (C). The phrase modifies "the device"; only (C) makes the device the subject.
7. (B) from. "Different from" is the conventional idiom.
8. (C) in. "Interest in" is the conventional idiom.

After each practice set

Do not just mark the score. Review the misses.

For each missed or guessed question, record the question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move in the Error Log Template.

If you cannot explain the miss, the question is not reviewed yet.

Error Log check

Record missed or guessed questions in the Error Log Template. Pay special attention to question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Where do I miss agreement because of prepositional phrases between subject and verb?
- Do I check that introductory phrases attach to the right subject?
- Which idioms do I keep getting wrong?

Lesson 4

English Production of Writing + Knowledge of Language.

These items reward reading the prompt: what specific job does the answer need to do?

What this lesson covers

- Topic development and unity (which sentence belongs?).
- Organization and cohesion (best place for a sentence).
- Concision and style (least wordy alternative).
- Tone and register (match the surrounding passage).

Method

Production-of-Writing items are essentially rhetorical-synthesis items. Identify the goal first — "introduce a topic," "name a consequence," "emphasize a contrast." Then evaluate each choice against the goal, not just against whether it's true.

Knowledge-of-Language items reward concision and register. Cut wordiness. Match the tone of the surrounding passage.

Practice set

1. Concision

"The committee voted _____ to approve the new policy."

- (A) , at the meeting that took place last Tuesday,
- (B) on Tuesday
- (C) , on Tuesday during the meeting,
- (D) at the Tuesday meeting that was held
- (E) Tuesday, on the day of the meeting,

2. Concision

"The author's writing style is _____ "

- (A) economical, with no wasted or unnecessary words.
- (B) economical.
- (C) economical and without waste.
- (D) economical in terms of word count.
- (E) economical, having very few words that are unnecessary.

3. Topic / unity

Sentence in question: "The committee was founded in 1972 and has met annually since then." Should this sentence be added to a paragraph about the committee's recent reforms? Why or why not?

- (A) Yes; it provides historical context that the paragraph requires.
- (B) Yes; it introduces the committee.
- (C) No; the paragraph's focus is recent reforms, and a founding date does not develop that focus.
- (D) No; the date is incorrect.
- (E) Yes; every paragraph benefits from historical context.

4. Organization

Where should the sentence "Most cities saw the largest gains in transit-adjacent neighborhoods" be placed in a paragraph about how a new transit line affected nearby housing markets?

- (A) As the topic sentence at the start.
- (B) As a supporting sentence in the middle.
- (C) As the conclusion.
- (D) It does not belong in the paragraph.
- (E) Anywhere; placement does not matter.

5. Style / register

Choose the option that best matches an academic tone: "The author argues that older field protocols _____"

- (A) totally missed the underground stuff.
- (B) totally screwed up the soil-related part of the picture.
- (C) failed to account for underground activity in their measurements.
- (D) did not do a great job with anything happening underground.
- (E) really did not understand the soil at all.

6. Rhetorical synthesis

Goal: emphasize a contrast between the two halves of a sentence. Which option best fulfills the goal?

Sentence: "The first half of the season was promising — the team won eight games in a row — _____"

- (A) and then the season ended.
 - (B) but the second half was marked by injuries and ended with three consecutive losses.
 - (C) which made the fans happy.
 - (D) which is unusual for any team.
 - (E) and the team continued to compete.
-

Answer key + rationale

1. (B) on Tuesday. Most concise.
2. (B) economical. The other options add words without meaning.
3. (C). The paragraph is about recent reforms; founding date does not develop that focus.
4. (B). It's a supporting sentence (where gains were largest) following a topic claim.
5. (C). Only this option uses an academic register. (A), (B), (D), (E) are informal.
6. (B). "But" + a contrasting second half is the move that emphasizes the contrast.

After each practice set

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If you cannot explain the miss, the question is not reviewed yet.

Error Log check

Record missed or guessed questions in the Error Log Template. Pay special attention to question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Did I read the goal of the rhetorical-synthesis item before scanning choices?
- Where did I pick a true-but-irrelevant choice?
- Where do I default to wordy phrasing when concise is available?

Lesson 5

Midpoint timed English + Reading warm-up and error analysis.

A mixed practice set + a structured review pass.

What this lesson covers

- A timed mixed English + Reading set.
- A structured error analysis using Error Log Template entries from Lessons 1-4.
- A working vocabulary-in-context list.

Method — analyzing the first four lessons

1. Open your Error Log Template entries from Lessons 1-4.
2. Sort by Miss type. Which category has the most entries?
3. Sort by Question type. Are misses concentrated in English or Reading?
4. Read the "What I misunderstood" column. Are the entries specific?

Practice set — mixed (12 items)

Set a timer for 14 minutes. Predict on words-in-context; read full sentences on Conventions; run the Three-Question Read on Reading.

1. Conventions

"The new committee, which had been formed in February _____ released its first report in May."

- (A) ,
- (B) ;
- (C) :
- (D) — and
- (E) no punctuation

2. Words in context

"The reviewer praised the documentary's _____ : every claim was supported by an on-camera primary source."

- (A) ambition
- (B) rigor
- (C) speculation
- (D) sentiment
- (E) brevity

3. Reading — central idea

Passage: "For most of the past century, paleontologists treated the K-Pg extinction as a single, asteroid-driven catastrophe. The asteroid hypothesis remains the most economical explanation. But recent work has emphasized that the impact landed on an ecosystem already under stress."

Which best captures the central idea?

- (A) The asteroid hypothesis has been rejected.
- (B) The K-Pg extinction is best understood as a combination of pre-existing ecosystem stress and the asteroid impact, not just one cause.
- (C) Asteroids cause all extinctions.
- (D) Ecosystems were stable before the impact.
- (E) Recent work is invalid.

4. Subject-verb

"The series of meetings between the department and the consultant _____ produced a clear next step."

- (A) have
- (B) has
- (C) having
- (D) is
- (E) had been

5. Pronoun reference

"Although the principal and the school board disagreed about the new schedule, _____ ultimately accepted the same recommendation."

- (A) they
- (B) it
- (C) he
- (D) one
- (E) those

6. Words in context

"For all her public _____, the senator privately admitted that the legislation was unlikely to pass."

- (A) bravado
- (B) hesitancy
- (C) hostility
- (D) modesty
- (E) tentativeness

7. Reading — function

In the K-Pg passage, the sentence "The asteroid hypothesis remains the most economical explanation" primarily serves to:

- (A) reject the older view.
- (B) acknowledge what the older view got right before the passage refines it.
- (C) describe a specific stratigraphic finding.
- (D) summarize the structure of the passage.
- (E) introduce a new branch of paleontology.

8. Modifier

"Born in 1922, _____ "

- (A) the violin became Stern's instrument.
- (B) Stern's career began.
- (C) Stern began playing the violin at four.
- (D) the lessons started early.
- (E) early lessons were given to Stern.

9. Rhetorical synthesis

Goal: emphasize a consequence. Which sentence best fulfills the goal? "Older protocols measured only what could be counted from above. _____ "

- (A) Newer protocols include soil sampling.
- (B) As a result, older protocols missed most of the underground activity that shapes forest health.
- (C) Many ecologists now study soil.
- (D) Soil is important.
- (E) Research continues.

10. Words in context

"The author's tone is unmistakably _____ : she neither softens her criticisms nor exaggerates them."

- (A) inflammatory
- (B) measured
- (C) provocative
- (D) celebratory
- (E) tentative

11. Conventions

"The fellowship requires three commitments _____ a weekly seminar, a monthly studio visit, and an end-of-year exhibition."

- (A) ,

- (B) ;
- (C) :
- (D) — and
- (E) no punctuation

12. Words in context

"The committee's findings were ultimately _____ : after months of testimony, no clear pattern emerged."

- (A) damning
- (B) inconclusive
- (C) decisive
- (D) sweeping
- (E) celebrated

Answer key + rationale

1. (A) comma. The nonrestrictive clause needs the closing comma.
2. (B) rigor. "Every claim supported by an on-camera primary source."
3. (B). Direct paraphrase.
4. (B) has. The subject is "the series," singular.
5. (A) they. Plural subjects.
6. (A) bravado. Contrast with "privately admitted."
7. (B). The sentence acknowledges what the older view got right before refining.
8. (C). Modifier must attach to Stern.
9. (B). The sentence names a consequence ("as a result").
10. (B) measured.
11. (C) colon.
12. (B) inconclusive.

After each practice set

Do not just mark the score. Review the misses.

For each missed or guessed question, record the question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move in the Error Log Template.

If you cannot explain the miss, the question is not reviewed yet.

Error Log check

Record missed or guessed questions in the Error Log Template. Pay special attention to question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move.

Working vocabulary-in-context list

Build a small list of words you actually missed across Lessons 1–5. Learn each word in a sentence relationship — not as an isolated definition.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Which miss type is most persistent?
- Which section (English or Reading) is leaking more points?
- What is the single change you can make in the next set to address that pattern?

Lesson 6

Reading — Key Ideas & Details.

Central-idea, evidence, and inference items reward reading the passage before reading the choices.

What this lesson covers

- Central-idea items.
- Evidence-and-detail items.
- Inference items.

Method

Run the Three-Question Read. Then go to items. For evidence items, find the exact line. For inference items, do not exceed what the passage supports.

Passage

"The standard literary history of Victorian poetry, for most of the twentieth century, treated Tennyson as central and Hopkins as peripheral. Hopkins, who published nothing during his lifetime, is now read as one of the most formally inventive poets of the period; Tennyson, who was Poet Laureate for forty-two years, is increasingly read as a representative figure of Victorian taste rather than a transformative one. The reasons for the shift are not obvious. One factor is that Hopkins's innovations in meter — the 'sprung rhythm' he devised — anticipated kinds of free experimentation that became central to twentieth-century poetics. Tennyson's craftsmanship, by contrast, refined a tradition rather than breaking from it."

Item 1 — Central idea

Which statement best captures the central idea?

- (A) Tennyson has been forgotten.
- (B) The literary-historical assessment of Tennyson and Hopkins has shifted: Hopkins is now read as more formally inventive and Tennyson as more representative.
- (C) Hopkins published widely in his lifetime.
- (D) Tennyson was not Poet Laureate.
- (E) Victorian poetry has been entirely rejected.

Item 2 — Evidence

Which sentence most directly supports the claim that Hopkins is currently considered formally inventive?

- (A) "The standard literary history of Victorian poetry..."
- (B) "Hopkins, who published nothing during his lifetime, is now read as one of the most formally inventive poets of the period;..."
- (C) "Tennyson, who was Poet Laureate for forty-two years..."

-
- (D) "The reasons for the shift are not obvious."
 - (E) "Tennyson's craftsmanship... refined a tradition..."

Item 3 — Inference

Based on the passage, one likely reason for Hopkins's rising reputation is:

- (A) the discovery of new Hopkins poems.
- (B) the influence of his metrical innovations on later poetics.
- (C) renewed criticism of Tennyson's politics.
- (D) twentieth-century editors' preference for shorter poems.
- (E) the decline of Victorian taste in academic curricula.

Item 4 — Detail

According to the passage, Tennyson is now read as:

- (A) a transformative figure in poetic technique.
- (B) a representative figure of Victorian taste.
- (C) a precursor to free experimentation.
- (D) primarily a craftsman of metrical innovation.
- (E) more formally inventive than Hopkins.

Item 5 — Inference

Which inference is best supported by the passage?

- (A) Future literary histories will reverse the current assessment.
- (B) Tennyson's reputation may continue to be re-evaluated as priorities in literary criticism shift.
- (C) Hopkins's poems were lost during his lifetime.
- (D) Victorian poetry is widely studied today.
- (E) Hopkins and Tennyson worked together.

Item 6 — Function

The phrase "by contrast" in the final sentence serves to:

- (A) introduce a new topic.
- (B) reverse the central claim.
- (C) underscore the difference between Hopkins's innovation and Tennyson's tradition.
- (D) summarize the passage.
- (E) describe a third figure.

Answer key + rationale

1. (B). Direct paraphrase.
2. (B). Sentence directly names Hopkins as formally inventive.

-
3. (B). The passage explicitly says his innovations anticipated twentieth-century poetics.
 4. (B). Direct paraphrase.
 5. (B). The smallest defensible inference — priorities shift, assessments evolve.
 6. (C). The phrase introduces the contrast within the comparison.

After each practice set

Do not just mark the score. Review the misses.

For each missed or guessed question, record the question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move in the Error Log Template.

If you cannot explain the miss, the question is not reviewed yet.

Error Log check

Record missed or guessed questions in the Error Log Template. Pay special attention to question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Did I run the Three-Question Read?
- Where did I overreach on inference?
- Where did I pick a true-but-wrong answer?

Lesson 7

Reading — Craft & Structure.

Words-in-context, function, and structure items reward reading the sentence and asking what the text is doing, not just what it is about.

What this lesson covers

- Words in context — use the sentence, not the dictionary.
- Function items — what does the sentence do?
- Structure items — how is the passage organized?

Passage

"The honeybee dance — the figure-eight pattern by which forager bees communicate the direction and distance of food sources — has been studied since the 1940s, when Karl von Frisch's work suggested that bees were transmitting precise spatial information. For decades the central question was whether the dance was, in fact, communicating that information, or whether the bees were responding to other cues such as odor or visual landmarks. By the 1990s, a series of controlled experiments established that the dance does indeed convey both direction and approximate distance. Yet ongoing work shows that the dance is best understood not as a stand-alone signal but as one input in a system that also includes scent, prior experience, and social learning."

Item 1 — Words in context

In the passage, "transmitting" most nearly means:

- (A) broadcasting on a frequency.
- (B) conveying information.
- (C) physically passing an object.
- (D) producing electromagnetic signals.
- (E) translating between languages.

Item 2 — Function

The sentence "For decades the central question was whether the dance was, in fact, communicating that information..." primarily serves to:

- (A) introduce a counter-argument.
- (B) characterize the open question the field was working on.
- (C) describe a specific experiment.
- (D) reject von Frisch's work.
- (E) summarize the passage.

Item 3 — Words in context

In the passage, "stand-alone" most nearly means:

-
- (A) freestanding architecturally.
 - (B) operating independently of other inputs.
 - (C) without humor.
 - (D) unconventional.
 - (E) physically isolated.

Item 4 — Function

The final sentence ("Yet ongoing work...") primarily serves to:

- (A) reject von Frisch's hypothesis.
- (B) refine the picture by adding context about other inputs.
- (C) introduce a debate about whether the dance is real.
- (D) summarize the structure of the passage.
- (E) describe a controlled experiment.

Item 5 — Structure

The passage is best described as:

- (A) chronological narrative of a single laboratory.
- (B) original framing, experimental confirmation, refinement of the picture.
- (C) three independent claims with no synthesis.
- (D) definitions, examples, and a moral.
- (E) a counter-argument and a defense of the original view.

Item 6 — Words in context

In the passage, "input" most nearly means:

- (A) keyboard typing.
- (B) one of several contributing factors.
- (C) a mathematical variable.
- (D) an instruction.
- (E) a question.

Answer key + rationale

1. (B). Context: "precise spatial information." (A), (D) are off-context; (C), (E) reverse the metaphor.
2. (B). The sentence names the open question. (A), (C), (D), (E) misread function.
3. (B). "Best understood not as a stand-alone signal but as one input in a system" — operating independently vs. as part of a system.
4. (B). The sentence refines the picture, not rejects it.
5. (B). Original framing → confirmation → refinement.

6. (B). Context: "one input in a system that also includes scent, prior experience, and social learning."

After each practice set

Do not just mark the score. Review the misses.

For each missed or guessed question, record the question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move in the Error Log Template.

If you cannot explain the miss, the question is not reviewed yet.

Error Log check

Record missed or guessed questions in the Error Log Template. Pay special attention to question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Did I use the sentence's logic for words-in-context, not the dictionary?
- On function items, did I name what the sentence does, not just what it is about?
- Where did I miss the structure of the passage?

Lesson 8

Reading — Integration of Knowledge & Ideas.

Compare-passage items reward identifying the relationship between two texts — agreement, disagreement, refinement, or application — before evaluating choices.

What this lesson covers

- Paired-passage relationships.
- Argument analysis: separating claim from evidence.
- Application and synthesis questions.

Paired passages

Passage A: "State arts funding plays an indispensable role in supporting cultural institutions that the private market cannot sustain on its own. Without sustained public support, much of the regional theater and chamber-music ecosystem would shrink dramatically."

Passage B: "The case for state arts funding is usually overstated. Most cultural institutions that receive state support could have raised the same money through private channels with somewhat more effort, and the strongest institutions are usually those least dependent on state funding."

Item 1 — Relationship

The authors of the two passages would most likely disagree about which claim?

- (A) Whether the arts contribute to civic life.
- (B) Whether state arts funding is necessary to sustain many cultural institutions.
- (C) Whether private donors exist.
- (D) Whether cultural institutions are cultural.
- (E) Whether the arts have an audience.

Item 2 — Specific support

Which sentence in Passage A most directly supports the claim that state funding is indispensable?

- (A) The first sentence.
- (B) The second sentence.
- (C) Neither sentence supports the claim.
- (D) Both sentences support the claim equally.
- (E) The second sentence contradicts the claim.

Item 3 — Application

Suppose a state arts council reports that 40% of mid-sized regional theaters that lost state support during a recession closed within five years. This evidence would most directly:

- (A) support Passage A and weaken Passage B.

-
- (B) support Passage B and weaken Passage A.
 - (C) support both passages equally.
 - (D) weaken both passages.
 - (E) have no relevance to either passage.

Item 4 — Synthesis

Which statement most accurately captures the relationship between the two passages?

- (A) Passage A and Passage B agree completely.
- (B) Passage A and Passage B agree on the value of the arts but disagree about whether state support is necessary to sustain cultural institutions.
- (C) Passage A and Passage B reject the same conclusion.
- (D) Passage A is about funding; Passage B is about something else.
- (E) Passage A and Passage B are unrelated.

Item 5 — Argument analysis

Passage B's argument depends on the assumption that:

- (A) Cultural institutions are unimportant.
- (B) Private donors are willing and able to make up the gap that state funding would leave.
- (C) State funding does not exist.
- (D) Cultural institutions are well managed.
- (E) State funding has been increasing recently.

Item 6 — Function

In Passage B, the phrase "with somewhat more effort" primarily serves to:

- (A) emphasize how easy it would be.
- (B) qualify the claim — acknowledging that private fundraising would not be effortless.
- (C) describe a specific fundraising strategy.
- (D) reject Passage A entirely.
- (E) summarize the structure of Passage B.

Answer key + rationale

1. (B). The disagreement is over necessity of state funding. (A), (C), (D), (E) are not in dispute.
2. (B). The second sentence describes the consequence of withdrawing state support.
3. (A). Evidence that theaters closed when state support was lost supports A's necessity claim and weakens B's substitutability claim.
4. (B). The most accurate synthesis.
5. (B). For Passage B's claim to hold, private channels must be a viable substitute.

6. (B). The phrase qualifies the claim, acknowledging some effort would be required. (A), (D), (E) reverse or misread; (C) is unsupported.

After each practice set

Do not just mark the score. Review the misses.

For each missed or guessed question, record the question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move in the Error Log Template.

If you cannot explain the miss, the question is not reviewed yet.

Error Log check

Record missed or guessed questions in the Error Log Template. Pay special attention to question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Did I name the relationship between the two passages before evaluating items?
- On application items, did I check which side new evidence supports?
- Where did I miss the hidden assumption in an argument?

Lesson 9

English Knowledge of Language + pacing drills.

Concision, tone, and pacing — the items that come up late in the section when fatigue is highest.

What this lesson covers

- Concision drills.
- Tone and register matching.
- Pacing under time pressure.

Method — pacing

ACT English: 50 questions in 35 minutes. About 40 seconds per item average. Conventions resolve faster; Production of Writing items take longer.

ACT Reading: 36 questions in 40 minutes. About 8.5 minutes per passage including reading. Budget 3 minutes for reading, 5–5.5 minutes for items.

When you fall behind, do not start guessing. Flag a single hard item and keep moving. Return after the easier items.

Concision drill

For each, pick the most concise option that does not change meaning.

1.

"_____ the consultant left, the team finalized the report."

- (A) At the moment when
- (B) After the time period during which
- (C) After
- (D) Subsequent to the departure of
- (E) Following on from the leaving of

2.

"The committee _____ to revise the policy."

- (A) made the decision in a unanimous fashion
- (B) unanimously voted
- (C) came to a unanimous decision
- (D) decided in a unanimous way
- (E) was unanimous in deciding

3.

"The paper, _____, was published in March."

-
- (A) which was written by a team of researchers,
 - (B) the writers of which were a team of researchers,
 - (C) written by a team of researchers,
 - (D) which had been written by a team of researchers,
 - (E) having been written by a team of researchers,

4.

"The author's writing is _____ "

- (A) economical, with no unnecessary or wasted words.
- (B) economical.
- (C) economical, without any waste.
- (D) economical and lacks waste.
- (E) economical, having very few wasteful words.

Tone drill

For each, pick the option that best matches an academic tone.

5.

"The author argues that older field protocols _____ "

- (A) totally missed the underground stuff.
- (B) failed to account for underground activity in their measurements.
- (C) just didn't get the soil thing.
- (D) sort of overlooked what was happening underground.
- (E) really, really missed out on soil.

6.

"The new policy was _____ "

- (A) totally amazing.
- (B) widely regarded as a significant improvement.
- (C) pretty great, all things considered.
- (D) okay, I guess.
- (E) the bee's knees.

Pacing drill (English)

Time yourself on these eight items. Target 5 minutes total.

7.

"The deadline was Friday _____ the team filed early." (A) , (B) ; (C) : (D) and (E) no punctuation

8.

"Neither the senator nor her staff _____ commented." (A) have (B) has (C) is (D) was (E) were

9.

"The committee voted, _____ the policy." (A) approving (B) approves (C) approved (D) approve (E) to approving

10.

"The library's collection of letters _____ never been gathered." (A) have (B) has (C) is (D) are (E) had had

11.

"The artist _____ who had lived in Berlin _____ returned to her studio outside Madrid." (A) , , (B) — — (C) ; ; (D) : : (E) ((

12.

"Despite a strong start _____ the season ended with three consecutive losses." (A) , (B) ; (C) : (D) — (E) no punctuation

13.

"_____ the conference began on Monday, the panel _____ for two weeks." (A) By the time, had been arguing (B) When, argued (C) Before, was arguing (D) After, will argue (E) Although, argues

14.

"The annual report is praised for its _____ : every recommendation is tied to a specific finding." (A) ambiguity (B) specificity (C) brevity (D) ambition (E) caution

Answer key + rationale

1. (C) After. Most concise.
2. (B) unanimously voted. Concise.
3. (C) written by a team of researchers. Participial phrase is most concise.
4. (B) economical.
5. (B). Academic register. (A), (C), (D), (E) are informal.
6. (B). Academic register.
7. (B) semicolon.
8. (B) has. "Nor" agrees with closer subject — staff (singular).
9. (A) approving. The participle is what follows after a comma.
10. (B) has. Singular subject.
11. (A) , , or (B) — —. Either pair works.

12. (A) comma.

13. (A) By the time, had been arguing. Past perfect progressive for the action that started before and continued up to "Monday."

14. (B) specificity.

After each practice set

Do not just mark the score. Review the misses.

For each missed or guessed question, record the question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move in the Error Log Template.

If you cannot explain the miss, the question is not reviewed yet.

Error Log check

Record missed or guessed questions in the Error Log Template. Pay special attention to question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Where do I default to wordiness when concise is available?
- Did the pacing drill cost me accuracy, or did accuracy hold?
- Which item type slowed me down the most?

Lesson 10

Final timed set + test-day protocol.

One module-style timed set, a structured review, and the protocol you will run on the day of the test.

What this lesson covers

- A timed mixed-section practice set.
- A structured review.
- Test-day protocol.

Method

1. Take the set in one sitting under realistic conditions.
2. After the set, write one sentence predicting which section (English or Reading) was strongest.
3. Then check answers and run a structured review.

Practice set — 15 items

Set a timer for 18 minutes.

Items 1-8 — English

1. "The deadline was Friday _____ the team filed early." (A) , (B) ; (C) : (D) and (E) no punctuation
2. "The collection of letters, scattered across three archives, _____ never been gathered." (A) have (B) has (C) is (D) had had (E) are
3. "Neither the principal nor the teachers _____ commented on the policy." (A) have (B) has (C) is (D) was (E) had been
4. "Born in 1922, _____ " (A) the violin became Stern's instrument. (B) Stern's career began. (C) Stern began playing the violin at four. (D) lessons started early. (E) early lessons were given to Stern.
5. "Originally designed for industrial use, _____ " (A) the engineer adapted the device for kitchens. (B) household kitchens use the device now. (C) the device was adapted for household kitchens. (D) the adaptation was done. (E) for kitchens, the adaptation followed.
6. "The campaign included three planks _____ improving public transit, expanding library hours, and reforming zoning." (A) , (B) ; (C) : (D) — and (E) no punctuation
7. "The author's writing is _____ " (A) economical, with no wasted words. (B) economical. (C) economical and without waste. (D) economical in terms of word count. (E) economical, having very few unnecessary words.
8. "The fellowship lasts twelve months _____ each fellow is expected to publish at least one essay." (A) , (B) ; (C) : (D) — but (E) and

Passage + items 9-15 — Reading

Passage: "The standard story of computer science treats Alan Turing's 1936 paper as a foundational moment in the field. This is true, but it can mislead. Turing's paper did not invent the idea of mechanized computation, which had a long pre-history in mathematical logic; nor did it lead, by itself, to working computers. Both the broader theoretical context and the much messier engineering work of the next two decades had to happen for Turing's argument to become operational."

9. The author's primary purpose is to: (A) reject Turing's paper. (B) defend the standard story unchanged. (C) revise the standard story by emphasizing context and engineering. (D) catalogue Turing's contributions. (E) describe the paper in detail.
10. The phrase "This is true, but it can mislead" most directly serves to: (A) reject the standard story. (B) introduce a refinement of the standard story. (C) describe an experimental result. (D) summarize the passage. (E) reverse the author's claim.
11. According to the passage, Turing's 1936 paper: (A) is unimportant. (B) is foundational but insufficient on its own to explain the rise of working computers. (C) led directly to ENIAC. (D) was the only theoretical work that mattered. (E) is best understood as engineering, not mathematics.
12. The passage implies that "the much messier engineering work" was: (A) unimportant. (B) more central to the rise of working computers than the standard story acknowledges. (C) completed by Turing himself. (D) limited to a single laboratory. (E) covered in detail in Turing's paper.
13. The phrase "a long pre-history in mathematical logic" most likely refers to: (A) Turing's earlier papers. (B) work in mathematical logic before 1936 that informed the idea of mechanized computation. (C) the history of philosophy. (D) the history of engineering. (E) the history of physics.
14. The passage's structure is best described as: (A) a chronological history of one laboratory. (B) a standard story, a refinement, and a synthesis. (C) a counter-argument. (D) three independent claims. (E) definitions, examples, and a moral.
15. (Words in context) "The committee's findings were ultimately _____ : after months of testimony, no clear pattern emerged." (A) damning (B) inconclusive (C) decisive (D) sweeping (E) celebrated

Answer key + rationale

1. (B) semicolon.
2. (B) has.
3. (A) have. "Nor" agrees with closer subject — teachers (plural).
4. (C). Modifier attaches to Stern.
5. (C). Modifier attaches to the device.
6. (C) colon.
7. (B) economical.

8. (B) semicolon.
9. (C). The passage refines the standard story.
10. (B). The phrase signals refinement, not rejection.
11. (B). The passage explicitly says the paper is foundational but insufficient on its own.
12. (B). The engineering work is named as having had to happen for Turing's argument to become operational.
13. (B). Mathematical logic before 1936 informing the idea of mechanized computation.
14. (B). Standard story → refinement → synthesis (the consequence).
15. (B) inconclusive.

After each practice set

Do not just mark the score. Review the misses.

For each missed or guessed question, record the question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move in the Error Log Template.

If you cannot explain the miss, the question is not reviewed yet.

Error Log check

Record missed or guessed questions in the Error Log Template. Pay special attention to question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move.

Structured review (30 minutes)

1. Sort all items by miss type.
2. Sort by section (English / Reading).
3. For Reading, name the sentence that should have anchored the answer.
4. For English, write the rule in one sentence.

Test-day protocol

- Sleep is more important than the night-before review.
- Eat earlier than you think you should.
- Bring nothing the test center does not allow.
- Pencil discipline on a paper-based ACT.
- Within a section: flag and skip if a Reading item is taking too long and you are no longer making progress. Return after the easier evidence-based items.
- Between sections: what is done is done. Reset focus.

After the test — retest plan

Run a follow-up official ACT section within two weeks for recalibration. The goal is not to retest the test; it is to confirm or revise the pattern that the methods produced under the highest-pressure conditions.

End-of-lesson reflection

- What pattern is most stable across all ten lessons?
- Where is the residual risk?
- What is my retest plan, and what is my English/Reading target on that retest?

Use this Workbook with the rest of the system.

The ACT Playbook

Use for strategy, official ACT baseline review, pacing, and section structure.

ACT Vocabulary

Use for vocabulary in context, roots, and word families.

Error Log Template

Use after every practice set to track missed questions, repeated patterns, and next moves.