

# ACT Math Strategies

- Answer the easiest questions first. The math section contains questions ranging from easy to hard, but the very easiest question is worth the same (1 point) as the very hardest question. You have to do 60 multiple-choice questions in 60 minutes, which means you have only about one minute on average for each question. So, you should skip those hard questions and come back to them later (if you have time) after finishing the easier problems.
- Get as many questions correct as possible with as few errors as possible. This may seem ridiculously obvious but it is very important in regards to your personal strategy. For example, if you are trying to get a score of 24, then you need to get 39-40 questions correct. Multiply the score you want by  $5/3$  to get the number of questions you need to get correct. These questions may as well be the easiest ones!
- There is a specific number of questions on each of six math topics, as shown below. If you don't know much about trigonometry, for example, don't worry about it, you are better off spending your study time on algebra questions!

■ Pre-Algebra:	14	questions
■ Elementary Algebra:	10	questions
■ Intermediate Algebra:	9	questions
■ Coordinate Geometry:	9	questions
■ Plane Geometry:	14	questions
■ Trigonometry:	4	questions

- Think about the question before looking at the answers. You should read the question at least two or three times. Make sure you answer the question: if it asks for radius, don't give the diameter!

- Connect what is given to what is being asked. Think about what concept the question is using, what it is giving you, and what it is asking for. Try to write down an equation that means what the words say.
- If you get stuck on a question, try going through the answers and plugging them in: the correct answer is the one that works!
- Dummy it down: plug in convenient numbers for letters (variables) to make a problem more concrete. This strategy can be very helpful when the question has variables ( $x$ ,  $y$ , ...) but the answers are just numbers.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, and you are basically out of time to figure it out, then guess! Guessing can be very helpful to get a few extra points, especially if you can eliminate one or more of the answers. There are no penalties for wrong answers on the ACT, so don't leave any answers blank!
- Geometry questions: Draw a picture! A picture can be very useful when one isn't provided. Fill in or label the picture with all the information that the question gives. Try to make an equation from the picture.
- Figures are not necessarily accurate (to scale). Just because two angles look the same in a figure doesn't mean that they are the same!
- Mark the questions that you skip in your test booklet so that you can come back to them easily. Also, circle the answers that you choose so that you can check the answer grid against your booklet later on. When you take practice tests, try to practice bubbling in answers as well so that you can do it quickly and accurately on the real thing.
- You shouldn't have to read the instructions at the beginning of each section on test day. Know all the instructions ahead of time.