



# ACT Reading Strategies

Before getting into how to attack the reading section, you must first develop your skill...

Your **READING SKILL!**

**READ.** *This is the best skill you can practice.* The digital age has brought about changes in reading habits, especially among younger generations.

Text messaging, social media and other online activities can compete for attention and time that might have been spent on reading books in the past.

You should read every day, without fail.

**The entire ACT is heavily weighted on reading.** Even over half of the math section consists of reading problems.

The Reading Strategies provided below won't help you do better in this section if your reading skills aren't strong.

**Developing your skill:**

Read 28 pages a day of any book of your choice.

No skimming. Actually read and learn to remember and comprehend what you read.

Remember, you are developing a skill.

Avoid distractions from your phone, siblings, music/TV, pets...

After a week, change your book to a different kind of subject and author to broaden your scope of reading.

The topic areas are Humanities, Social Studies, Natural Sciences, and Prose Fiction.

This is why you need to change your reading materials.

Each week change your subject matter to cover these topics.

Step up your game after 4 weeks of reading 28 pages a day, to taking one day off a week, but reading 33 pages a day.

This will change your pattern and strengthen your skill level

## **3 ways to approach the Reading passages**

Everyone is different with their reading skills so when practicing, time yourself for 8 minutes and try each approach to see which one fits your reading skill.

- 1. Read the whole passage in detail:** This is really only a good strategy if you're both thorough and quick as a reader. It's probably the worst option if you're already worried about running out of time.

2. **Read the questions first:** Figure out what details you need to look for in the passage by reading the questions first. You'll then jump back to the passage to find these details. This method can be disorienting for some people, but for others it can save time.
  
3. **Skim the passage, and then attack the questions:** Get a sense of the content, structure, and purpose of the passage before approaching the questions, and then return to the passage for more detailed information required by specific questions.

## Quick Tips

**Know where the passage is going:** Create a passage map by looking for key words and sentences to predict and evaluate what the passage is "doing." Create this map by marking up the passage as you read.

**Don't use your memory:** Find the answers in the passages. The questions and answers can tempt you to think you know the correct answer because of key words and phrases.

**Go out of order:** Tackle the passages based on your reading strengths and interest. From the passages, find the ones that appeal to you first and work towards the hardest and most uninteresting ones.

## ACTIVE READING

Active reading empowers you to efficiently identify the main purpose of a passage and understand the structural elements that support it. This technique involves a dynamic interaction with the text, where you ask continuous questions about the author's intent and narrative choices rather than passively absorbing every detail.

### How to Practice Active Reading:

#### 1. Focus on the Main Idea and Structure:

- As you read, concentrate on discerning the general outline of the passage rather than getting bogged down in minute details. This involves recognizing how the passage is organized and what each part contributes to the main argument or story.
- This is more akin to conducting a treasure hunt, where each clue leads you closer to the main treasure—the central theme or argument.

#### 2. Efficient Reading Between the Lines:

- Active reading is not slow, detailed reading, but it also isn't mere skimming. It's a targeted search for the passage's purpose and main idea, carried out with intent and attention to overarching themes rather than granular specifics.
- You're on a mission to uncover the 'why' behind the passage, which guides how you read and interpret the text.

#### 3. Utilizing Structural Clues:

- Keep an eye out for how the author constructs the passage. Notice structural keywords that often indicate transitions or pivotal points, such as "moreover" or

"on the other hand." These keywords help you map out the text's structure and understand shifts in tone or argument.

- These clues are like signposts that help you navigate through the complexities of the passage.

#### **4. Recognizing Signal Words:**

- Certain words like "for example" or "such as" signal supplementary information that supports a broader point. When you encounter these, adjust your reading speed—these are not always central to understanding the main argument but provide color and detail.
- By recognizing these cues, you can efficiently allocate your attention and avoid unnecessary focus on illustrative details unless they are relevant to the questions.

#### **5. Applying Intuitive Reading Skills:**

- Just as you might predict plot twists in a movie or anticipate a character's actions in a TV show, use your intuition to foresee where the passage might be heading. This predictive ability is crucial and can save time, especially under test conditions.
- Observing actions and dialogue can often clue you in on upcoming developments, helping you read with foresight.

#### **6. Emphasizing Logical Flow and Keywords:**

- Pay close attention to words that build logical connections—such as "because," "thus," and "therefore"—which are vital for following the author's reasoning. These aren't just random words; they're the glue that holds the passage's arguments together.
- These keywords are consistently used across different texts and are pivotal in weaving together the narrative or argumentative threads of the passage.

#### **7. Synthesizing the Big Picture:**

- Consider how individual pieces of information connect to form a coherent picture. What is the cumulative effect of the details? How do they interlock to illustrate or support the main point?

- This holistic view is what you should aim to understand by the end of your first read-through, with a deeper dive into specifics only if required by the questions.

## PASSAGE MAPPING

Passage mapping is a sophisticated technique that enhances your comprehension and navigation through complex texts, especially under the constraints of timed exams like the ACT. This method involves taking strategic, concise notes in the margins as you read, turning an active reading session into an interactive dialogue with the text.

### Why Map Passages?

1. **Enhances Time Efficiency:** Although it may initially seem counterintuitive, noting key ideas as you read saves significant time later. This approach allows you to quickly locate specific arguments and evidence when answering questions, bypassing the need for re-reading lengthy passages.
2. **Promotes Disciplined Reading:** Mapping compels you to distill each paragraph to its essence. This discipline helps you avoid the common pitfall of underlining too much or too little. By focusing on extracting the paragraph's purpose, you cultivate a deeper engagement and understanding of the text.
3. **Strengthens Mental Engagement:** Writing annotations in your own words is an active process that enhances comprehension and retention. This method forces your brain to process the information more thoroughly, aiding in quicker recall and understanding during review or when tackling related questions.

### Effective Mapping Techniques:

- **Paragraph-by-Paragraph Organization:** For each paragraph, write down a concise summary (about 3-5 words) that captures its core purpose. This could

relate to setting the argument's stage, providing evidence, or describing a theoretical perspective.

- **Use Transition Words as Cues:** Transition words such as "however," "therefore," and "furthermore," act as cues for understanding the structure of the argument and the relationship between ideas. These words often signal shifts in tone, continuation of thoughts, or contrasting points, guiding you in summarizing the logical flow of the text.
- **Visual and Mental Mapping:** Your notes should create a visual map of the passage, offering a clear outline of each section's role within the overall argument. This map keeps your brain actively engaged, improving your grasp of the text and allowing for rapid location of information during the question-and-answer phase.

### **Detailing the Purpose in Mapping:**

When noting the purpose of a paragraph, be specific:

- **State the Thesis:** Identify the central claim or thesis and briefly note its significance.
- **Establish the Tone:** Determine the tone—whether it's critical, optimistic, neutral—and consider how it influences the reader's perception of the text.
- **Supporting Arguments:** Note whether the paragraph provides support for the main argument and how it contributes to the overall narrative or argument structure.
- **Evidence and Examples:** Distinguish between general statements and specific examples. Highlight the type of evidence provided—statistical, anecdotal, historical—and its role in reinforcing the paragraph's point.

### **Integrating Mapping with Active Reading:**

- **Dynamic Interaction:** Consider passage mapping an extension of active reading. Each enhances the other; mapping organizes the insights gained through active reading into a coherent structure.
- **Key Questions for Active Mappers:** As you map, continuously ask: What is the writer's purpose here? How does this section contribute to the overall argument? What is the tone, and how does it affect the argument's presentation? These questions keep you focused on extracting the most valuable information for understanding the text's message and structure.
- **Recognition of Patterns:** Over time, you'll begin to recognize patterns in how arguments are structured and developed across different texts. This insight can dramatically speed up your reading and comprehension in future passages.