

Includes Official
ACT[®]
Practice Questions

MasteryPrep[®]

DECODING

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO
PREP FOR THE **ACT**[®]

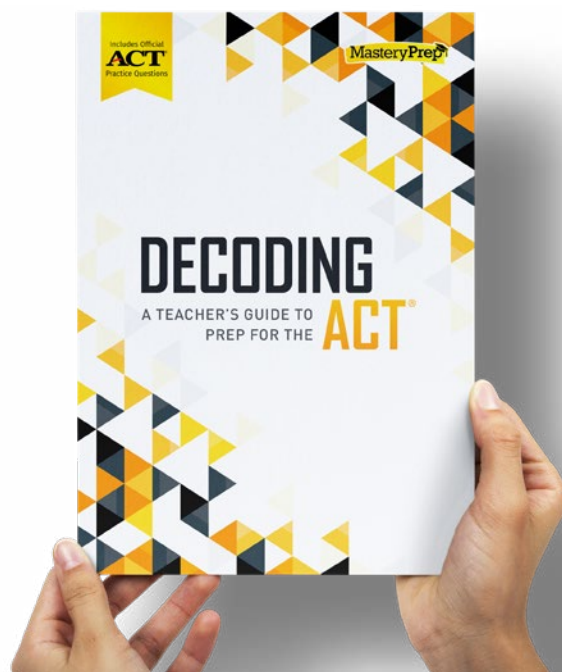
Students struggle to connect what they learn in class to the ACT, and there isn't enough time or expertise for teachers to bridge this gap.

That's where we come in.

Decoding: A Teacher's Guide to Prep for the ACT®

Decoding: A Teacher's Guide to Prep for the ACT is the ultimate one-day professional development course for boosting ACT scores.

This professional development provides teachers with strategies for incorporating test-taking skills into their everyday core curriculum and motivating students to succeed on both the ACT and in academics.



Mastery Pyramid

Time Mastery introduces the concept of time management and provides proven techniques for improving students' ability to handle timed tests.

Test Mastery covers fundamental test-taking strategies applicable to all of the subject areas on the ACT and provides a foundation for all subject-specific, test-taking strategies found in the *Decoding the ACT* book.

Content Mastery provides a framework for the content remediation strategies that boost ACT outcomes and prepares teachers to make the most of the content strategies provided later in the book for each test section.

Section 1

Introduction

The ACT isn't just a standardized test. It's a chance to level the playing field. Instead of being overlooked by colleges, students can use their scores on the ACT to show just how capable they are.

Did you know that ACT performance is strongly correlated to family income? Students who come from wealthier homes are the ones most likely to do well. On the other side of things, under-resourced students tend to view college entrance tests like the ACT as gates to opportunity—and those gates are locked.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

For too long, college readiness preparation has been the domain of high-priced tutoring companies who tend to serve the affluent exclusively.

MasteryPrep is working to change that, to throw the gates to test prep wide open. Unlike traditional test prep programs, MasteryPrep focuses on classroom teachers and their students, along with how to best empower their ACT prep efforts. We do this with a methodical approach to ACT score improvement that turns most conventional test prep wisdom on its head.

Each year, MasteryPrep helps over 300,000 students gain access to high-quality test preparation at no cost to the students or their families.

In *Decoding: A Teacher's Guide to Prep for the ACT*, we'll share our research, practices, and methods so that you've got everything you need to equip your students for success. Let's face it: even a single point on the ACT can unlock a new, brighter future for your students.

Mastery Pyramid

Foundational to MasteryPrep's approach to ACT preparation is the Mastery Pyramid.

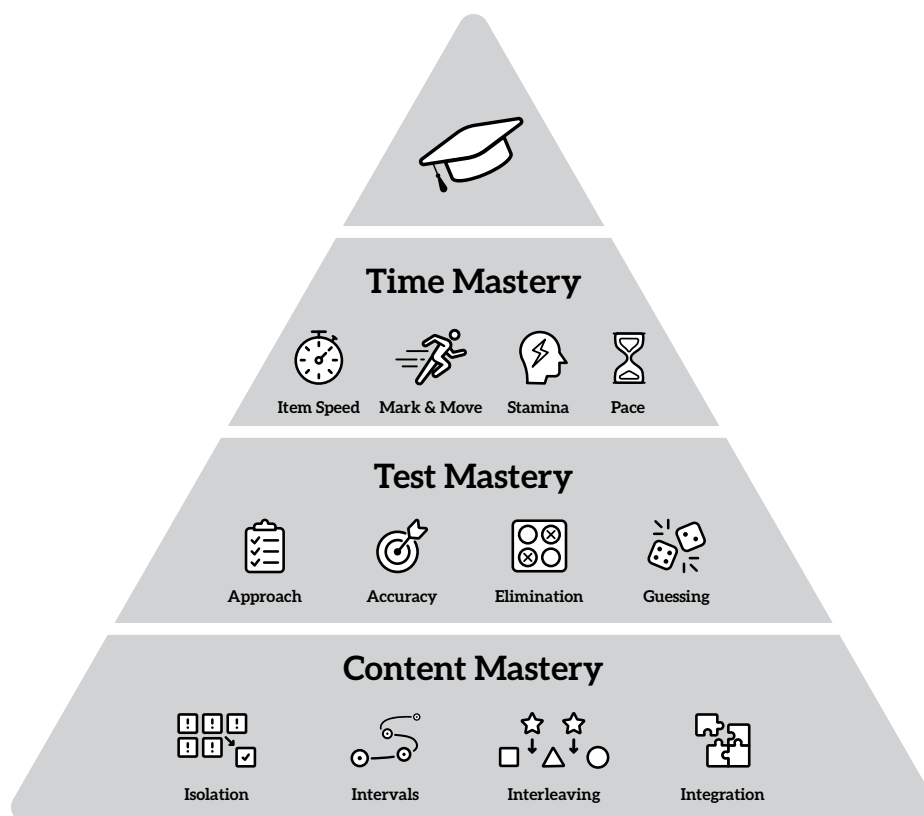
There are three ways students can improve their ACT scores. To make the largest and the most reliable gains, you have to work on all three.

Time Mastery: The ACT is a timed test, and students who are better at time management will outperform students who aren't.

Test Mastery: The ACT is a multiple-choice test, and students with strong test logic and good test-taking processes have an advantage.

Content Mastery: The ACT is ultimately an academic achievement test, and students who can bridge the gap between what they've learned in class and the test questions do well on test day.

If you can help students improve across all three dimensions, you can transform a "bad test-taker" into a strong test-taker. That's the goal of Decoding: A Teacher's Guide to Prep for the ACT.



Mastery Pyramid

Introduction

ACTION Plan

A good objective is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART™).

Orientation (Motivation and Test Structure)

Action	Date
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____

Time Mastery

Action	Date
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

Test Mastery

Action	Date
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

Content Mastery

Action	Date
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

Micro-Practices

How Micro-Practices Work

Micro-practices are small practices that you can use in response to specific situations in the classroom. You can also think of them as micro-habits. Together, they add up to improving ACT score outcomes without eating up valuable class time or making big shifts in how you teach.




Our micro-practices contain a few key components:

- 1. Goal**
The point of the micro-practice. The benefit your students receive from it.
- 2. Pick Your Moment**
The context where you apply the micro-practice. The green light for a teachable moment.
- 3. Opener**
How you get the conversation started. The launch pad.
- 4. Follow-Up Discussion**
Some micro-practices also include questions to help you create a follow-up discussion. Feel free to take or leave them, depending on the situation or students.

Micro-Practice: Item Speed Awareness

If you include speed in your discussions (and not just focus on scores) and if you describe not only how to arrive at the right answer but also how to do so quickly, you will create opportunities for students to develop Time Mastery.

MICRO-PRACTICE

- 1 → Help students become aware of the time it takes them to answer a question.
- 2 →  **PICK YOUR MOMENT**
When reviewing a question that most students answered correctly.
- 3 →  **OPENER**
How long did it take you to answer this question?
- 4 →  **FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION**
 - How many seconds did that point cost you?
 - What could you have done to move more quickly?
 - Was there any part of the question that you felt you wasted time on?

Mini-Lessons: A Guide to the Guide

Mini-lessons provide a scripted learning experience to help your students develop a discrete time, test, or content mastery skill. A typical mini-lesson lasts ten to fifteen minutes. They're designed to be lightweight enough to embed into your class and impactful enough to be worth doing so.

Included are all of the resources you'll need to conduct each mini-lesson.

Cover Page

The cover pages provide an overview of the mini-lesson, along with learning objectives and timing suggestions.

- 1. Time Suggestions**

Every mini-lesson has a suggested duration. Feel free to modify this to fit your needs.

- 2. Mastery Indicator**

Mini-Lessons are designed to help with Time Mastery and Test Mastery. These indicators provide a quick reference to help you decide which area you'd like to help your students improve.

- 3. Learning Targets**

Concrete goals for the lesson are included as straightforward, easy-to-review statements.

Student Handout

The student handout includes everything the students need as you lead them through the lesson.

- 4. Practice Questions**

The handouts will usually include one or more practice questions, which are very similar to what students will experience on the test.

All participants in this workshop have the right to photocopy the student handouts for classroom use. The handouts are also available as PDFs at <https://www.masteryprep.com/dact>, which you can use to print or distribute electronically to your students. Each student participating in the lesson should have a print or electronic copy.

Important Note: The handout is *not* set up for independent study—if you give your students the sheet and tell them to complete the work at home, they won't get much out of it, and it might not even make sense to them. The handout is designed to help you conduct a live lesson.

Cover Page

Decoding: A Teacher's Guide to Prep for the ACT

Mini-Lesson 2

Answer Awareness

1 8 minutes Time Mastery 2

In this lesson, students will practice previewing their choices before they start to answer a question. The information they gather from doing this will save them time and effort.

Mini-Lesson 2

English Answer Awareness

Learning Targets

1. Use the structure of the answer choices to avoid unnecessary precision or consideration.
2. Identify clues in the answer choices to save time and increase focus.

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Student Handout

Answer Awareness

English Mini-Lesson 2

Instructions
Use Answer Awareness to answer the question.

Answer Awareness
The ACT is a multiple-choice test, so all of your options are right there on the page. You can use the details of the answer choices to gather important information that can save time and effort on test day.

11. The writer is considering adding the following statement here:

Many of the green lights in the world come from light-emitting diodes.

Should the writer include this sentence?

- A. Yes, because it helps explain how Fitzgerald's green light can be simultaneously optimistic and depressing.
- B. Yes, because it provides further details about the uses of green light.
- C. No, because it doesn't relate to Fitzgerald's main idea of the green light as a symbol.
- D. No, because it only mentions one producer of green light.

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Teacher Guide

The teacher guide provides the script for the mini-lesson.

1. Summary

A mini-lesson summary offers a quick explanation of the technique or skill addressed.

2. Teacher Dialogue

Bold text with a line along the left side is teacher dialogue. It's what we recommend you say. We've written it like a script because it's easier to read than, "Point out to your students..." or "Tell your students..." or "Ask your students..." or—well, you get the picture.

Just because we've written it like a script, that doesn't mean you should read it like a script. The best mini-lessons are delivered using a unique take on the materials. Aim to adapt in response to your students' interactions with the content.

Essentially, the dialogue is a starting point and a reference. Imagine that to the left of every teacher dialogue segment is a small note saying, "Say something like this..." And after each dialogue line, there's this disclaimer: "Or, if you'd like, say something else entirely." We don't want anyone to be a *Decoding: A Teacher's Guide to Prep for the ACT* robot.

3. Sample Responses and Explanations

After the dialogue asks a question, we provide a sample student response for the answer. Most of our questions are open-ended, so answers can vary. One of the hallmarks of MasteryPrep content is that every question or exercise that appears in a lesson is accompanied by an explanation or sample response.

4. Directions

We italicize directions and wrap them in a rectangle.

5. Next Slide

A slide deck for each mini-lesson is available at <https://www.masteryprep.com/dact>. The slide indicator shows when you should move to the next slide in the series.

Teacher Guide

Decoding: A Teacher's Guide to Prep for the ACT

English Mini-Lessons

1 In this exercise, students will practice Answer Awareness, saving time and effort on questions about relevance.

Would you rather take a final exam that has 10 multiple-choice questions or 5 essay questions? The multiple-choice one.

Is choice A the right answer? How can you tell? No, because light-emitting diodes have nothing to do with optimism or depression.

2 If you pick essay questions, you'll have half the questions. Why pick the longer test? Because the multiple-choice questions are easier.

What makes them easier? You just have to pick one of the options.

The facts in choice A are just plain wrong, so we know we can eliminate it. What about choice B? Should we eliminate this answer choice, too? Yes, because the sentence doesn't talk about the uses of green light.

3 No. There's a question here.

When a real question shows up—like in question 11—we want to give it just as much attention as we do the answers. Let's start with reading the passage.

At this point, all of the yes answers are gone just because their facts are wrong. What does the question ask again? Just the last part. Should the writer include this sentence?

And what's our answer to that question? No, because we've eliminated all the "yes" answers.

4 Select a student to read the passage selection.

Who'd like to read the question for us? The writer is considering adding the following statement here: *Many of the green lights in the world come from light-emitting diodes. Should the writer include this sentence?*

If we'd spent even one second wondering whether the writer should include the sentence, it would all be wasted time. Only the facts in the answer choices matter. That's why you have to always check the answers. Being aware of the answers means saving time and mental energy.

Let's finish out this question. Compare choices C and D. What's the main difference? One talks about green light as a *symbol* and the other refers to *one producer of green light*.

The question structure here puts a little pressure on you, as a test-taker. It makes you want to be thoughtful, which would be great if you were writing an essay. But you're not. What's the problem with coming up with your own custom answer to a multiple-choice question like this? Our answer won't match the right choice exactly.

Which answer choice should we eliminate? Why? Choice D, since *one producer of green light* doesn't appear in the sentence that comes before.

Questions like this can get really subjective *really* fast. Don't take the bait. We know there are only four possible answers to this question, so what should we do? Read the choices before trying to answer.

That means choice C is the best answer. Why? It tells us that the writer doesn't need that sentence because the phrase *light-emitting diodes* is unrelated to the symbol of *optimistic and depressing situations* mentioned in the previous sentence.

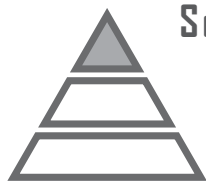
5 SLIDE 287.1

We call this process Answer Awareness. Let's try it out with question 11. What does choice A say? Yes, because it helps explain how Fitzgerald's green light can be simultaneously optimistic and depressing.

Let's reflect on our process. How did Answer Awareness help you answer this question? We avoided thinking about a question that didn't even need to be answered.

So, on test day, what should you always read before think about answering? The question *and* the choices.

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Section 2

Time Mastery

Why Time Mastery?

The ACT is a timed test, which means that the psychometricians who develop it use time to help them differentiate between student ability levels. Their logic is that students who have a greater command of the content will move more quickly. In other words, students who take the test on-pace are more likely to be ready for college.

But is that 100% accurate? What about students who ...

- ... are meticulous readers or problem solvers?
- ... double-check their answers every time?
- ... are wracked by test anxiety and need a few minutes to compose themselves before they start answering questions?

For many reasons, a timed test can benefit some test-savvy students while failing to reflect the achievement level of others.

PURPOSEFUL PREP



Reflect

What percentage of your students do you estimate struggle with time during tests?

_____ %



Take Action

Want to illustrate how much impact time has on your students? Give them double the time to take a math or reading test and watch their scores jump by several points.



Test Mastery

Why Test Mastery?

The ACT is multiple choice.

Unlike constructed response questions, multiple-choice questions give the same number of points whether you know the right answer or guess. However, trap answers make it easy to make mistakes. The process of elimination takes center stage, since proving three choices wrong is just as valuable as proving one choice right.

All of this means that students without strong test-taking skills are at a disadvantage. By teaching Test Mastery, you can help students ...

- ... use the test's structure against itself.
- ... avoid trap answers presented in the choices.
- ... eliminate weak answers and guess wisely.

We've found that test-taking is a skill like any other, and students can improve by getting coached on the fundamentals of Test Mastery.

PURPOSEFUL PREP



Reflect

What percentage of your students would identify themselves as a "bad" test-taker?

_____ %



Take Action

Lead a discussion about sports or board games. If students don't know the rules of the game, will they win? Likely not. What if they learn the rules plus a few strategies that give them an advantage? They improve and win! The same applies to standardized testing. Know the rules, learn the strategies, and watch scores increase.



Section 4

Content Mastery

Why Content Mastery?

Inevitably, on the ACT, you have to know stuff.

It's the most obvious aspect of test preparation, but somehow, it's the most neglected by the industry. Probably because it's hard.

Content Mastery takes a lot of time and effort. It can produce the biggest score swings, but don't expect fireworks overnight.

Time Mastery can be markedly improved in a few hours, Test Mastery in a few days.

Content Mastery is improved over weeks, months, and even years.

Content Mastery is happening whether you're intentional about it or not. As students progress through their high school classes, they're picking up skills they need for the ACT. The more rigorous their classes (think AP Calculus vs. Business Math), the better off they'll be. You see this in their year over year Aspire or PreACT scores. They get better from 9th to 10th to 11th grade. That's because they are learning things.

With a focused effort on Content Mastery, it's possible to make great strides. This section of the book discusses how.

MasteryPrep Standard Alignment

The following pages contain standard crosswalks between state standards and the ACT Standard Families from this text (page 94). In addition, each standard indicates whether the standard family is *foundational*, *aligned to*, or an *extension* of the state standard. Please review page 184 for more information.

Common Core

ELAR
pg. 414

Math
pg. 422

Alabama

ELAR
pg. 432

Math
pg. 442

Arkansas

ELAR
pg. 452

Math
pg. 466

Florida

ELAR
pg. 476

Math
pg. 482

Kentucky

ELAR
pg. 496

Math
pg. 507

Louisiana

ELAR
pg. 518

Math
pg. 527

Mississippi

ELAR
pg. 536

Math
pg. 549

North Carolina

ELAR
pg. 560

Math
pg. 570

Tennessee

ELAR
pg. 578

Math
pg. 591

Texas

ELAR
pg. 602

Math
pg. 616

*Indicates alignment to all standard families within the standard family category

New features have been added!

Train your students with official ACT practice questions!

Why should you invest in MasteryPrep professional development for the ACT?

- Provides a comprehensive, universal approach to standardized test prep
- Offers insight into which skills are tested and how often they appear on the test
- Features detailed resources that align the ACT standards with standards already being taught in the classroom

Decoding the for ACT Includes:

- Classroom-ready mini-lessons that help students master time management and test-taking strategies
- An actionable, one-page checklist for making the most of the program's concepts
- Micro-practices that encourage good test-taking habits

The new Decoding format offers:

- A one-day event led by a MasteryPrep certified facilitator- virtual or in-person
- Subject-specific agendas for ELA, math, and science teachers
- A comprehensive workbook for every attendee, further access to printable lesson plans, and digital resources, including standard crosswalks and lesson material
- An actionable, one-page checklist for making the most of the program's concepts



"It's one of few PDs I have actually enjoyed and felt it benefitted me and will guide me in a way that will benefit my students."

Christopher Conger

JOHN OVERTON HIGH SCHOOL, TN

"There was a lot of helpful advice that I know will definitely help me in the future. More determined now than when I was before!"

Afretina Pickens

MIDFIELD HIGH SCHOOL, AL

"I found our consultant knowledgeable and practical. She provided opportunities to respond and kept the parameters real. I felt that she recognized the various needs and educational levels of all our students."

Sarah Barrick

LIBBY HIGH SCHOOL, MO