



# The Best ACT Advice You Can Get

## 5 Strategies that Will Get You 4+ Points

*By Fred Zhang*



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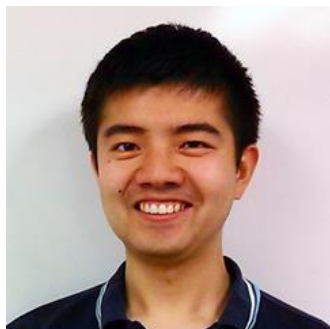
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# INTRO

## How to use this ACT guide.



Hi - I'm Fred, and I've spent thousands of hours working in ACT prep. I personally teach students and families how to conquer the test. When you tackle the ACT the right way, it's actually one of the simplest parts of college admissions. But with the wrong approach, it can be a huge headache.

If you're like thousands of other students, you're probably confused about ACT prep. You may be **unsure** about what exactly to study. You might **lack the motivation** or focus to spend enough time on the ACT. You might have problems finding time to fit ACT prep into your **busy schedule**.

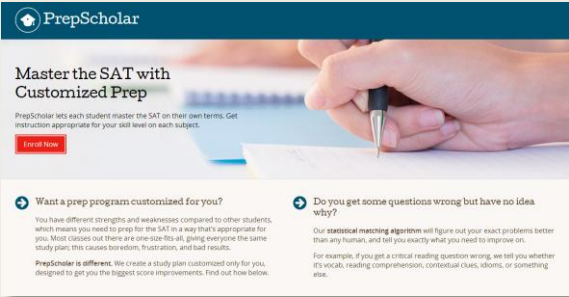
I completely understand. I've worked with hundreds of students who had these exact problems. By fixing these problems, I've seen the immediate results on students' ACT scores. I know beyond a doubt what works and, more importantly, what doesn't work.

**That's why I wrote this guide: to teach you how to overcome the biggest ACT prep problems.**

Before we start, there's something important I have to say:

**Your reading of this guide assumes that you are using my ACT prep program, PrepScholar.** While you don't need to buy my program to get key insights from this guide, my advice works best when combined with PrepScholar. I just worked with a student who boosted her score by 8 points, using this guide and PrepScholar.

This program is the brainchild of thousands of hours of ACT training. Every strategy, tactic, and philosophy has been integrated into PrepScholar as the most effective way to improve your ACT score.



[Visit to see why PrepScholar is ideal for you.](#)

PrepScholar is an online ACT prep program covering everything on the ACT. It creates a complete study plan customized to each student, so you'll always be working on what **you** need to improve on. You'll be assigned specific step-by-step instructions on what lessons to take and what practice problems to work on. It's available to anyone with an Internet connection, which means you can fit it into your schedule at any time. Finally, it has an awesome 4+ point money-back guarantee.

Regardless of whether you're in the program, you'll improve

tons just by following the 5 strategies in this guide. These strategies have worked time and time again, for thousands of students. This guide will lift the cloud of doubt in your mind about ACT prep, giving you action-oriented tips you can start using **right now** to boost your ACT score.

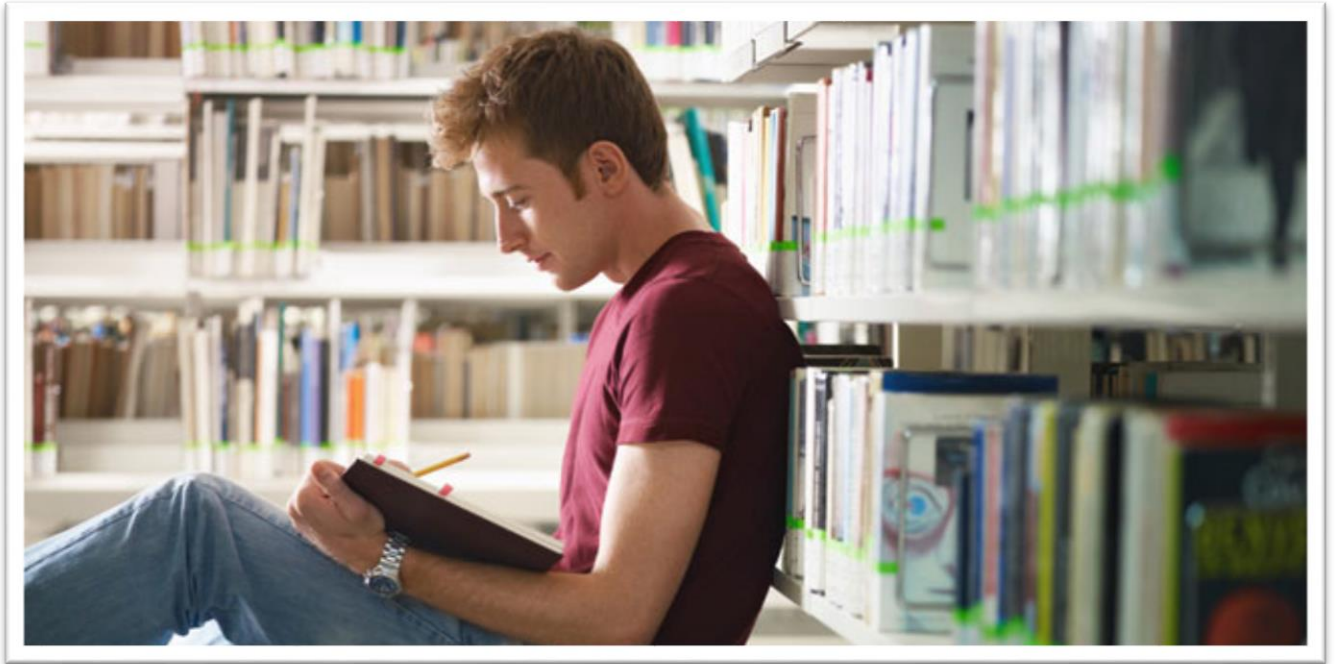
Follow the advice in this guide, and I'm completely certain that you'll know the fundamentals of getting the ACT score you need to get into your dream college. In fact, if they don't work for you, I want you to email me because you'll be the first student I've ever worked with that didn't benefit from the advice in this guide.

And one more note before we begin: this guide was written to be as concise and clear as possible. I recommend you read every page and avoid skimming to get the most out of this guide.

I always want to hear from my readers. **If you have ANY questions or feedback, no matter how small, always feel free to email me at [fred@prepscholar.com](mailto:fred@prepscholar.com).** I read and respond personally to all my emails.

# 1: The Critical Factor

You get what you put in



No matter who you are, where you come from, or what your skill level is, there is one factor, one inevitable law of the world, that can't be bypassed. **You need to be motivated to put in the necessary time and effort to study.**

(Parents, this means your student, not just you!) No study process in the world can make a dent on your ACT score in under 10 hours.

Now, a lot of parents try to create motivation by being overbearing on their students. They'll force them to study,



punish them if they don't, and generally cause a lot of stress and friction for everyone. This usually doesn't work too well.

However, there's another way for you to be motivated – **for you to want it yourself**, or what I call **internal motivation**. Every internally motivated student I've worked with spent far more time studying and got better results, compared to students who were simply afraid of being punished.

So how can you be internally motivated? It's important to learn both the **big picture** and the **little picture**.

Here's the big picture – the ACT is crucial for getting into your dream college. The fact is, your ACT score contributes anywhere from **30 to 50%** to whether your dream college admits you as their newest student. If you don't believe this, call up the admissions office of your dream school. If you don't meet the school's cutoff score, you're not getting in.

Despite this fact, students across the country spend much less time studying for the ACT than on everything else in their lives: homework, extracurriculars, sports, friends. You're probably starting to see why this doesn't make much sense.

What does all of this mean?

“ **An hour of ACT studying will boost your college admission chances far more than anything else, if you’ve spent fewer than 40 hours studying thus far.** ”

Why is this? Many students spend hundreds of hours on activities like volunteering, sports, music, etc. If you’ve already put in 200 hours into your activity, an extra 40 hours in that activity isn’t going to do **anything** to raise your chances of getting into college. It still surprises me how many students don’t realize this until it’s far too late.

On the other hand, 40 hours spent on the ACT, studying in the right way, will likely boost your score by many points. This will often **double, triple, even quadruple your odds of being admitted to your dream school.**

The key is, **you have to study for the ACT in the right way.** That’s what my program PrepScholar is perfectly designed to do. 40 hours studying poorly won’t raise your score, but 40 hours using proven techniques and strategies definitely will. Learn more about how we do this by visiting [www.PrepScholar.com](http://www.PrepScholar.com).

So for **big picture motivation**, here’s what I want you to do: picture your dream school. This is the school you want to go to – not what your parents or friends tell you to go to. Imagine getting the admissions packet in the mail, setting the stage for the rest of your life. That’s what



studying for the ACT is going to get you.

Now that we've got the big picture in place, we need to work on the **little picture**. Studying for the ACT can still be boring, and it's easy to lose motivation when you actually start studying. It's too easy to crack out your phone, message your friends, or start browsing Facebook.

To crack the secret to motivation, I've studied dozens of psychological research projects and worked with hundreds of students. By far, this single concept has worked over and over again:

“ **Break up all of ACT prep into small, clear-cut goals, and get rewards for meeting those goals.** ”

Humans are most motivated when they accomplish small tasks and receive rewards or self-satisfaction when they accomplish these tasks.

This principle works for every difficult goal in life. People on diets fail to lose weight if they see the goal as a giant task of losing 100 pounds. It's just too big a task.

However, if they **break up the giant goal into small, manageable goals** – just eat fewer calories one day, then two days, then one week – dieters suddenly have a plan they can stick to. With each pound lost, dieters see the

results, and they feel motivated to keep going.

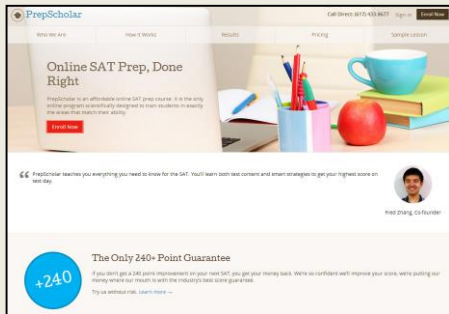
**ACT prep works exactly the same way.** You need to break up the giant ACT test into small, manageable parts. You need to see that putting in time really does raise your score. Then you'll build a habit of studying for the ACT through internal motivation.

I designed my program PrepScholar around this successful strategy. PrepScholar breaks up the giant task of ACT prep into **small learning goals**, through skill-based lessons and quizzes. The program constantly gives you feedback on how you're improving and encourages you at every step.

I've also found that students often need someone to help them schedule their study sessions and to **hold them responsible** for actually studying. This is why PrepScholar will check in weekly and prompt you to schedule actual study sessions. We'll send you reminders and track each time you come in. We'll also send weekly reports to you and your parent so you know you're on track.

Students who use PrepScholar have said over and over again that it's the best prep system they've ever used. **They no longer have to worry about *what to do, when to do it, and how.*** PrepScholar takes care of all of that. Instead, students can focus on what's really important: learning how to tackle the ACT and get more points. Some have even said studying with PrepScholar is addictive. Imagine that.

If you want to learn more about how the program works, just visit <http://www.PrepScholar.com> or email me at [fred@prepscholar.com](mailto:fred@prepscholar.com). I'd love to hear from you.



[Read more about how PrepScholar motivates our students.](#)

We've just covered a huge issue: motivation. Now we actually have to learn *how* to prep for the ACT. Read on.

# 2: Don't Trust Imitators

## Make your practice genuine



You can spend all the time in the world prepping for the ACT, but if you don't do it in the right way, you're not going to make any progress. Even worse, you can lower your score. By reading this guide, you'll have a huge advantage over students who don't. From here on, we're going to discuss the major strategies to study **effectively** for the ACT.

The ACT is a special test. It's unlike any test that you've taken in school. Why? It's purposely designed to trick the



average student. Questions will be worded in strange ways. Trick answers will bait unsuspecting students into picking them carelessly.

**Why in the world would the ACT do this?** To understand this, we have to realize that the ACT is basically a college entrance exam. Colleges use the ACT to compare students to one another. If your ACT score is higher than another applicant's, you'll have a better shot at getting in. If your ACT score isn't high enough for the school's standards, you're not getting in. Period.

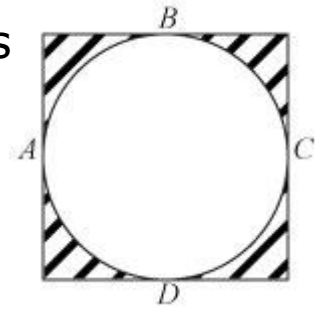
So colleges need a way to tell who's at the top, who's average, and who's below average. Imagine if, instead of the ACT, college applications used a standardized exam testing whether you could tie your shoes. 99% of people would pass with flying colors. This would be useless for colleges in their admissions decisions.

**“ The ACT gives colleges what they want by making the test tricky for most students. ”**

Here are a few specific examples:

- In the English section, the ACT uses grammatically correct English that you would **never** hear in normal conversation. Students get tricked into picking the wrong answer simply because it “sounds weird.”

- In the math section, the ACT tests concepts that most students know, but in **very convoluted ways**. For example, one ACT question asks you to find the area of the shaded region to the right. Most geometry classes will never teach you how to do this specifically.



- In the reading section, the ACT asks students to interpret reading passages. In school, usually every interpretation is correct – it just depends on how you argue it. This is absolutely wrong for the ACT. There is only ever **ONE correct answer** for every single question on the ACT.

So the problem is, the ACT is really tricky, and most students fall for the ACT's traps. How do we avoid this?

“ **Practice only with the most realistic ACT questions you can get.** ”

The ACT has a very specific style. Questions and answers are written in a very specific way. This style is consistent across every single ACT test. By practicing with realistic ACT questions, you'll learn this style and understand all the ways the ACT tries to trick you.

Unfortunately, **most ACT practice questions out there are really bad for learning how to do the ACT.** These

prep books are typically written by people who have mediocre experience in the ACT. The authors often haven't actually scored well on the ACT themselves, so the questions they write will be of much lower quality than the actual ACT. Textbook publishers want to cut costs and quality, so they rely on their brand name to sell copies without actually caring about educating the student.

Imagine that you wanted to join a baseball team. Instead of practicing with baseballs, you decided to train using a wiffle ball, and you got really, really good at hitting wiffle balls. You understood how they moved and how to hit them in just the right way. Come tryout day, the pitcher throws a baseball at you, and **it's a total surprise**. Swing and a miss, over and over again.

ACT prep works the same way! **Practicing on bad questions will train you for the totally wrong thing.**

This is why the program you're about to use, PrepScholar, uses two sources of realistic practice questions. First, we incorporate **5 REAL practice tests published by the ACT organization itself**. These are actual tests from previous administrations of the ACT, containing over 1,700 questions. PrepScholar integrates these into your study schedule and tells you exactly the right times to take these practice tests.

Secondly, for even more practice, I've hired the best ACT

experts in the country to craft nearly 1,000 of the most realistic ACT questions available. These experts have scored in the **top 1% of all students on the ACT** (many earning full scores), have graduated from top schools like Harvard and MIT, and have earned multiple teaching awards. They know the ACT in and out, and the questions they write are better than anything else out there (aside from the official ACT practice tests).

“ **By training with PrepScholar, you’ll be training with baseballs, not wiffle balls.** ”

To learn more details about how PrepScholar trains you with the most realistic ACT questions, visit [www.PrepScholar.com](http://www.PrepScholar.com). You’ll also see a few of our instructors and learn about their backgrounds, so you’ll be confident that you’re learning from the best.

Now that we know *what* kinds of questions you need to use, we need to cover *how* you’ll actually be using them. Keep reading to learn more.

**P.S. If you’re finding this guide helpful, please share it with your friends, family, colleagues, team-mates, and other students!** I want it in the hands of as many people as possible – the more students and parents who know this, the better!



# 3: Focused Practice

Drill your specific skills.



It's true that PrepScholar has thousands of realistic practice questions, but these would be ineffective without the right organization. You have to study the right questions, at the right time, in the right order, to get the most point improvement possible. **PrepScholar does all of that for you automatically**, so you don't even have to think about it. I'll explain why this is important.

To do well on the ACT, you need to learn dozens of separate skills. There are four major sections – English,



Math, Reading, and Science – but each section is made up of multiple sub-skills:

- Within Math, you need to know number operations, algebra, geometry, probability, and more. Even within algebra, you need to know how to solve equations, how to deal with word problems, properties of functions, etc.
- Within Reading, you need to know the five major passage question types, each of which need to be treated completely differently.
- Within English, you need to master over a dozen grammar rules, many of which you don't learn formally in school.

“ If you ignore these skill distinctions, you're going to waste 90% of your time. ”

Most students who study for the ACT have an approach so broad that it becomes completely ineffective. They say, “I need to improve my reading score,” or “I need to get better at math.” Because they think it's an overall weakness, they do whole ACT sections over and over again. When they fail to improve their score, it's no surprise to me. **They're not focusing on training their specific weaknesses!**

Let's imagine that you're trying to learn to swim. There are four major strokes you want to learn: freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly. For some reason, you think that trying to learn all four at once is the best way to start. So

you jump in the pool and start swimming. You first face the water and complete one stroke of freestyle. Then you flip onto your back and complete one stroke of backstroke. You flip back onto your stomach and try breaststroke. And so you continue, thrashing through the water in a fury, while spectators look on bewildered.

Clearly this is ridiculous. You would never learn swimming this way! Instead, you'd focus on one stroke, make progress, then switch to another. At the end, you'd master all four strokes.

**The ACT is exactly the same.** To get better at the math section, you need to get **focused practice** on each individual skill. To get better at integer questions, you need to do a lot of questions focusing on integers. To get better at geometry-triangle questions, you need to do a lot of questions focused on triangles.

**“ By focusing on individual skills and mastering them, you will master the ACT as a whole. ”**

**This is exactly how PrepScholar works.** When you start with PrepScholar, you'll take a diagnostic that will determine your weaknesses in over forty ACT skills. PrepScholar then creates a study program specifically customized for you. To improve each skill, you'll have focused lessons dedicated to each skill, with over 20 practice questions per skill. This will train you for all the

questions that will ever appear on the ACT for this skill (and remember Strategy #2: you have to learn how the ACT actually asks questions).

**There's no other prep system out there that does it this way.** You don't want to do lots of questions without clear organization. Doing one triangle question, then one fraction question, then one algebra question is just like switching between swimming strokes in the pool. You won't make good progress this way.

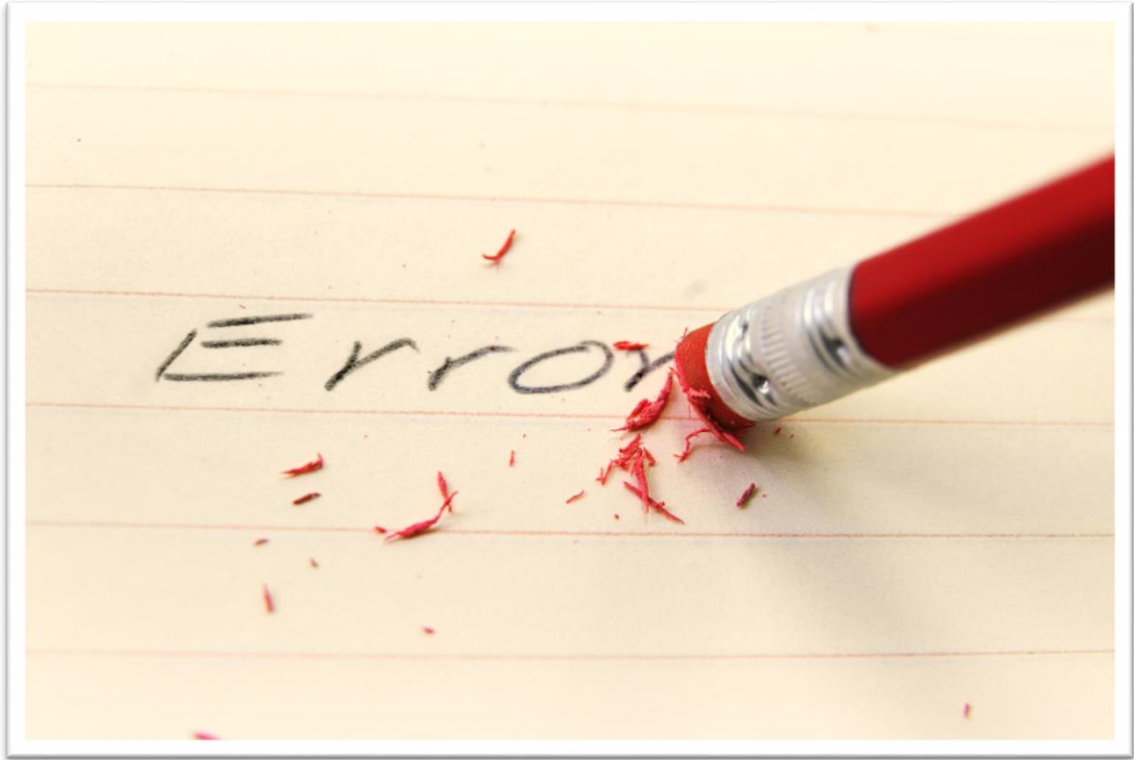
To see how exactly PrepScholar focuses you on improving specific skills, visit [www.PrepScholar.com/how-it-works](http://www.PrepScholar.com/how-it-works) or email me at [Fred@PrepScholar.com](mailto:Fred@PrepScholar.com) with absolutely any question you have.

I hope all of this is making a lot of sense to you. I've heard from so many students that learning these strategies and using PrepScholar have completely changed their perspective on how to prep for the ACT. It seems so obvious after you hear it that you wonder why everyone doesn't know these facts.

But after all, this is what the ACT wants – they want people to prep for the ACT in the wrong way so that people do poorly, which as we learned before is what is useful for colleges. But by reading this guide, you'll now be ahead of most students. Keep on reading to learn even more.

# 4: Master Your Mistakes

You get what you put in



So far we've learned that effective ACT prep is built on three things: being motivated to study, studying with realistic questions, and studying in a focused way. This is how PrepScholar will work for you when you start.

And yet, this still isn't enough. Many students focus too much on quantity, not quality. They blaze through hundreds of practice questions and get a false sense of confidence. After all, they've seen hundreds of questions – how can they NOT have mastered the ACT?



They're ignoring this critical rule:

“ For every single question you get wrong, you **MUST** understand **WHY** you got it wrong, and you **MUST** know how to avoid this mistake in the future. ”

Simply doing questions isn't enough. **When you miss a question, you miss it for a reason.** You either didn't know the material, or you made a mistake in your work, or you made a careless mistake. If you don't figure this out, you're going to make the same mistake, over and over and over again.

Let's use another sports analogy (you can tell I love these). You're trying to learn to throw a football like a quarterback. You try throwing it 100 times based on what you've seen on TV. You get a little better – the ball goes farther – but it's still not quite right. It doesn't spiral correctly, or your aim is off. But you don't know what to actually change.

Now imagine if you had star football player Tom Brady standing by your side. You throw the ball once, and, using his years of experience, he tells you **exactly** what you need to improve. You need to grip the football exactly like this. Your arm needs to bend at this angle. Your throwing motion needs to follow this arc. Putting all this into place, you throw the next football better than you did after 100 practice tries.

Then, after just 20 tries with this kind of feedback, you're already way better. You know now exactly what to avoid in the future, thanks to understanding what mistakes you were making.

Again, **the ACT works exactly the same way!** You have the choice of blazing through 100 practice questions and feeling smug without improving. **OR, you can focus on why you're missing each specific question,** and after just 20 questions you'll already have mastered your mistakes. This is how you'll get better with PrepScholar.

“ **PrepScholar gives a detailed explanation for every question and builds in review into every single lesson.** ”

When you use PrepScholar, you'll not only complete high-quality questions that are focused on specific skills. **You'll also review every single question that you missed and learn what mistakes you made.**

Even better, PrepScholar keeps track of every question that you've ever missed so that you can review your mistakes at any time. That's the advantage of building our own custom technology – we create what's most useful for you because we've mastered the ACT prep process ourselves.

[Click here](#) to learn more about how a PrepScholar lesson works to show you how to avoid the ACT's most common mistakes.

# 5: Customize to Yourself

## Ignore one-size-fits-all



All of this is a lot take in. You've probably already significantly changed how you think about the ACT, from understanding the importance of motivation to doing the right types of questions, in the right way. Don't worry, PrepScholar is going to handle all of it so you can stop worrying on what to learn and focus on **actually learning**.

The final strategy I have for you is the final pillar that will tie all of this together. It hinges on the idea that you are a truly unique person. And I don't mean this in the way that





your second grade teacher meant it. I mean this:

**“ You have different strengths and weaknesses from other students. You have different goals. This means you need to prep in a way that’s customized to you. ”**

Just think about yourself compared to other students at your school. You might have gotten better grades in math than in English, or vice versa. Every student has different skills. It’s unlikely that any other student has the exact same skills as you. Therefore, every student needs a different study plan for the ACT.

Here’s the problem: besides PrepScholar, nearly every other prep method out there treats students exactly the same.

Books give the same strategies and lessons to every reader, and students read the book cover to cover in the same way.

Expensive classes from big-name companies put 20 students into the same classroom and drag everyone through the same lectures. (Let’s put aside the fact that they hire inexperienced people fresh out of college without any teaching experience).

See which of the following apply to you (likely all):

- If you feel you're stronger in some skills than others, you need to prep in a way that reflects your unique abilities.
- If you're aiming for a specific score target, you need to prep differently from someone aiming for a higher or lower score. You need to use different strategies.
- If you have a busy schedule and need a way to fit in prep into your schedule, you need prep that adapts to your time availability and helps you commit time to your study plan.

**With PrepScholar, you'll be able to address all of the issues above.** We completely customize the study program for your skill abilities, so that you're always working on what's most effective for you. We give you different strategies depending on what your score target is.

To motivate you to study, you'll schedule time every week to study and we'll remind you of your study appointments. We'll also give you and your parent weekly progress reports so you'll always know you're on the right track.

**PrepScholar**

Master the SAT with Customized Prep

PrepScholar lets each student master the SAT on their own terms. Get instruction appropriate for your skill level on each subject.

[Enroll Now](#)

- Want a prep program customized for you? You have different strengths and weaknesses compared to other students, which means you need to prep for the SAT in a way that's appropriate for you. Most classes out there are one-size-fits-all, giving everyone the same study plan; this causes boredom, frustration, and bad results. **PrepScholar is different.** We create a study plan customized only for you, designed to get you the biggest score improvements. Find out how below.
- Do you get some questions wrong but have no idea why? Our **statistical matching algorithm** will figure out your exact problems better than any human, and tell you exactly what you need to improve on. For example, if you get a critical reading question wrong, we tell you whether it's vocab, reading comprehension, contextual clues, idioms, or something else.

[Visit to see why PrepScholar is ideal for you.](#)

# AND NOW WHAT?

There it is – my **top 5 strategies** designed to get you 4+ points on the ACT. If you dig deep and apply these strategies, you will without a shadow of a doubt raise your ACT score to where you want it to be.

If you learned a lot from this guide, I'd really love if you did a few things:

**1. Share this with as many people as you can.** Email it to your friends, classmates, team-mates – anyone who would benefit from it. Post it on Facebook and share it on Twitter. I want as many people as possible to benefit from this.

**2. Email me** at [Fred@PrepScholar.com](mailto:Fred@PrepScholar.com) and let me know what you think. I'm happy to answer ANY question and to hear any feedback – even if you don't end up using PrepScholar.

**3. Visit [www.PrepScholar.com](http://www.PrepScholar.com)** and learn more about what I honestly believe is the best ACT prep program on the planet. Even if you don't decide to use us, you might learn more about organizing your own prep.

Thanks for reading, and good luck!

-Fred