**Reading (Comprehension) Section Information and Tips**

This section is 35 minutes long and contains 40 questions that measure your reading comprehension skills. Several passages are included from books, journals, or magazines. Some are fictional, and some are factual. The following topics may be included: history, economics, psychology, politics, anthropology, art, music, biology, chemistry, physics, or others. Basically, the passages can be about almost anything and can be a bit dry or boring. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ACT\_test)

* Study the main verb or verbs in the question. If you are to *compare*, *contrast*, or *define*, then be sure that your response aligns with that verbiage.
* For any questions regarding vocabulary, think about root words or if the word sounds positive or negative in connotation. For example, the word *harsh* actually sounds harsh when it is spoken, as opposed to the word *airy*.

1.      Before reading the passage, skim the questions and underline a key word or phrase in the question. The key word should identify the topic of the question. If you don’t immediately spot something to underline, go on to the next question. Do not look at the answers at this point.

2.      In general, do NOT read slowly and carefully; you don’t have enough time to do so. Onthe other hand, don’t read so fast that you don’t understand what you are reading. In general, push yourself to read a little faster than you usually do. This fast reading is referred to as skimming.

3.      Your goal is to understand the main idea or topic of each paragraph and the organization of the passage. Try to get a good overall picture of what the passage is about and where information is located in the passage. Underline main ideas and keywords in each paragraph. If you don’t spot any, write a word or two in the margin that indicates the paragraph’s topic. This will help you quickly find information when you answer the questions.

4.      On average, spend 3-4 minutes rapidly reading or skimming a passage.

5.      Skimming techniques:

* 1. a.       Read the first sentence of each paragraph at your normal pace. The first sentence is usually the main or topic sentence. It gives you an idea of what the paragraph is about.
  2. b.      Speed up your reading pace for the middle part of the paragraph.
  3. c.       Don’t worry about the details such as names, dates, and explanations. Read through these rapidly. Read over examples rapidly. However, underline any words that match those you previously underlined in the questions.
  4. d.      Read the last sentence of each paragraph at your normal pace. The last sentence is often a concluding or summary sentence that helps you further understand the main point of each paragraph.

6.      Don’t get hung up on words you don’t know; skip them and keep on reading. If you must figure out an unknown word in order to answer a question, use context clues to figure out the meaning of the word. For context clues, read the sentence and preceding and following sentences.

7.      For the Reading Prose Fiction passage, do not focus on the first sentence in each paragraph. Read it all at the same pace. You should take more time to read this type of passage than the others. Focus on the characters and feelings (underline these).

8.      When you take practice ACT tests, time yourself when you read the passages. If you are taking more than 4 minutes, you need to pick up the pace.

9.      Many of the questions in the Reading and Science tests are inferential comprehension questions; that is, the answers are not directly stated in the passage. In such instances, stop and think about the full meaning of what the paragraph or passage says. In other words, you need to put together the information in the passage to come up with the answer. Words or phrases that indicate the question is inferential include “It is reasonable to conclude . . . ;” “The author’s purpose in writing . . . ;” “It is reasonable to infer . . . ;” “The main purpose of the paragraph . . . ;” “The passage indicates . . .” When you see these cue phrases, don’t reread everything trying to find a direct answer; it isn’t there. Instead try to make sense of the passage and draw a logical conclusion.