Achievable

ACT DUMP SHEET

Grammar, usage, and style

The English section

50 questions in 35 minutes, about 42 seconds each: **Conventions of Standard English** 38—43%, **Production of Writing** 38—43%, **Knowledge of Language** 18—23%. Choose **NO CHANGE** when the original is best; on a **NOT acceptable** question, pick the one wrong choice.

Parts of speech

- **Verbs:** action, linking (*is, was, been*) and helping (*can, could, may, might, will, would*)
- **Preposition** (*at, of, in, for, with*) opens a phrase ending at its object: *the cat* **in the alley**
- **Adverb** modifies a verb, adjective or adverb, often with *-ly*; **adjective** modifies a noun

Commonly confused words

who / whom	Swap in *he / him*: *he said* → **who**; *to him* → **whom**
affect / effect	Usually verb / noun: **affect** *me*, *an* **effect**
their, they're, there	Belonging to them / *they are* / a place, or *There are*
then / than	Time / comparison: *taller* **than**
lay / lie	*Lay* a thing (*laid, laid*); *lie* down (*lay, lain*)
seen / saw	*Seen* needs *has, have, had*: *I have seen*, *I saw*

Subject—verb agreement

- **Find the verb and ask who did it**; cross out prepositional phrases and modifiers
- The nearest noun is often the wrong number: **Each** *of the people in the countries* **has**
- A **collective noun** acting as one is singular: *The crowd* **was** *getting excited*
- **The clue:** two choices alike but for a verb's *-s*

Verb tenses

	Simple	Perfect (done)	Continuous
Past	took	had taken	was taking
Present	takes	has taken	is taking
Future	will take	will have taken	will be taking

- **Keep the tense** unless the time frame shifts; **past perfect** for the earlier past: *I realized I* **had forgotten**
- No perfect for a simple past: *She* **took** *four hours*; never *tooken*

A or an, and adjective commas

- **An** before a vowel **sound**: **an** *obvious seed*, **a** *graduate*
- **The "and" test:** if *and* fits between two adjectives, they take a comma: *two energetic, playful North American otters*

Pronouns

- Match the antecedent's number: *The crowd made* **its** *way*
- **Unclear?** Name the noun: **the engineer's** *notes*, not *her notes*
- No *they* without one: *At my school,* **the principal** *expects*

Modifiers

- A modifier, or an underlined phrase, goes **next to what it describes**: *The homeowner with broken pipes*
- An opening phrase describes the noun after the comma: *Exhausted,* **Grant** *slept*, never *Relieved,* **his problems** *faded*

Sentence structure

- **Comma splice:** two sentences joined by a comma alone
- **Fragment:** no subject—verb pair (*Working tirelessly*) or no complete thought (*Which he didn't understand*)
- **Parallelism:** grouped items share one form: *running and jumping*, not *running and to jump*

Transitions

Read the idea **before** and the idea **after**, then name the link.

Contrast	*however, nevertheless, granted, instead*
Addition	*moreover, furthermore, likewise, besides*
Cause and effect	*thus, consequently, hence, accordingly*
Sequence	*originally, next, subsequently, finally*
Example	*for example, for instance, namely*

- **Transition sentence:** echoes both sides: *astrophysicist* → *astrophysics courses*

Placing and keeping text

- **Place it by its pointers:** *These layer together* follows *thin sheets*; *An example of this* can't open a passage
- **Add or delete?** Keep only what serves the passage's purpose: a true but off-topic fact is a no
- *Yes* or *no* is easy; judge the **reason**

Knowledge of language

- **The shortest, clearest answer wins:** *to obtain and get* → *to get*
- **Vocabulary:** eliminate, pick, move on; hard isn't right
- **Style:** match the passage; mark the question's clues, meet every goal