Achievable

ACT DUMP SHEET

Reading

Four passages, 36 questions, 40 minutes

36 questions (27 scored) in **40 minutes**: about **10 minutes a passage**, 67 seconds a question. Usually **four passages** of 9 questions, one a **paired set** (Passage A and B); one may carry a graph or table. **Key Ideas & Details** 44—52%, **Craft & Structure** 26—33%, **Integration of Knowledge & Ideas** 19—26%. Every answer is in the passage.

Passage types: ACT labels the first Literary Narrative, the rest Informational

Usual order	What it is	Mark as relevant information
1 Literary narrative (prose fiction)	A short story, often fiction, about characters and what goes on in their heads	The **perceptions, observations, feelings and thoughts** of characters
2 Social science	Nonfiction about a historical person, event or place: like a history book	**What makes history:** the subject's background, accomplishments, values and beliefs
3 Humanities	Nonfiction on art and culture, or a true story: reads like one of the two above	**First person** ("I"): as a literary narrative, plus lessons learned; **third person**: as social science
4 Natural science	Biology, chemistry, physics; the passage gives all the science you need	**What is important to science:** the big ideas, a **misconception cleared up**, what the **last paragraph** proves

Annotate every passage

- **Names:** circle; **dates and time markers:** box
- **Locations:** jagged underline
- **Relevant information** for the passage type: parentheses or brackets
- **Not just underlining:** it turns automatic
- **Annotate long questions too:** circle the words that say what to find

Paired passages

- Questions come **in order:** Passage A, then Passage B, then both
- **Read A → answer A → read B → answer B → answer the comparisons**
- Reading only A first keeps the two stories straight

Pacing

- **5 minutes or less** to read and annotate a passage; **25—30 seconds** a question
- **Slow reader?** Never reread a paragraph: later ones often clear it up
- **Start with your best passage type**; leave your weakest for last
- **About 3 minutes left** and a whole passage to go: answer the **line-number** questions first
- **No penalty for guessing:** fill in every question before time is called

Key idea, detail and inference questions

- **Key idea (passage):** theme or purpose; reread the **intro and conclusion**
- **Key idea (paragraph):** read its **first and last sentences**
- **Detail** ("According to the passage"): stated in the **body**, often in **synonyms**; topic sentences find the paragraph
- **Chronology** (about one a test): the event mentioned first is almost never the earliest
- **Inference** ("suggests", "implies"): not stated, but the passage **always supports** it; keywords point to the evidence

Vocabulary in context

- **1** Find the **line number**; **2** read a few lines above and below
- **3** Predict your own word, then pick the closest choice
- **4** Reread the sentence with your choice in it
- Context beats vocabulary: a word may have several meanings ("court")

Three test traps

- **Familiar language:** a choice copies the passage's words but misses the question or twists the meaning
- **Extreme words** (*always*, *never*, *best*): often too strong; safer is *often*, *usually*, *some*
- **Irrelevant information:** true in the passage, but not what the question asks
- **Defense:** answer in your own words with the choices covered, then match