Test-Taking Strategies for ACT English Test

Adapted from Dakota State University ACT Test Prep Resources

* Pace yourself
  + Skim an entire passage—1 ½ minutes
  + 30 seconds per question
  + Mark any clear errors
* Focus on underlined portions—what elements are included: word use? Verb tense? Punctuation? Tone? Purpose? NOT or LEAST?
* Examine alternatives—note especially the differences among them (do not select an answer that solves one problem while creating another)
* Determine BEST answer—eliminate poor choices
* Reread the sentence *inserting* your choice

***Passage 1: 15 questions***

**Passage 1 [1]**

Many people think of the desert as barren and desolate, but a visit to Death Valley dispenses such an opinion. A group of pioneers was naming the valley for its desolate desert environment after they crossed it in 1849. Situated in Southern California, the drought and the heat have turned the valley into a dangerous but picturesque desert. Known today as Death Valley National Monument, it offers as many attractions for the tourist than any scenic area.

**1**.

[ ] A. NO CHANGE

[ ] B. disposes

[ ] C. dispels

[ ] D. impels

**2**.

[ ] F. NO CHANGE

[ ] G. were naming

[ ] H. having named

[ ] J. named

**3**.

[ ] A. NO CHANGE

[ ] B. valley has been turned by drought and heat

[ ] C. valley’s lack of water is turning

[ ] D. drying of the valley has turned

**4**.

[ ] F. NO CHANGE

[ ] G. from

[ ] H. as

[ ] J. over

**Passage 1 [2]**

The valley center consists of a salt lake that had almost dried up. Called and named Badwater, it is the lowest place in the Western Hemisphere. Nearby are the remains of a town once inhabited by miners who worked the borax deposits. Kings Canyon National Park, 90 miles away, is located in a beautiful natural setting.

**5**.

[ ] A. NO CHANGE

[ ] B. has

[ ] C. had been

[ ] D. was

**6**.

[ ] F. NO CHANGE

[ ] G. by the title of

[ ] H. there and elsewhere

[ ] J.OMIT the underlined portion

**7**.

[ ] A. NO CHANGE

[ ] B. was working

[ ] C. would be working

[ ] D. are working

**Passage 1 [2]**

The valley center consists of a salt lake that had almost dried up. Called and named Badwater, it is the lowest place in the Western Hemisphere. Nearby are the remains of a town once inhabited by miners who worked the borax deposits. Kings Canyon National Park, 90 miles away, is located in a beautiful natural setting.

**8**. Does the information about the distance between the ghost town and Kings Canyon National Park contribute to the description of Death Valley in this paragraph?

[ ] F. Yes, because it is a good idea to provide as much information as possible about distances

between tourist attractions.

[ ] G. Yes, because the information supplements the information about Badwater.

[ ] H. No, because the focus of this paragraph is on the valley center and its environs

[ ] J. No, because the emphasis of this paragraph is on Telescope Peak.

**Passage 1 [2 continued]**

Badwater its actually a bed of an old lake. Close inspection of the lake reveals salt crystals in infinite variations. Driving to Dante’s Point from Badwater, a half hour’s drive, where you can view the highest and lowest points in the continental United States. In an hour’s drive, you can visit a ghost won, hike up Telescope Peak, explore any of the colorful canyons, or climb down into a volcanic crater. A short trip will take you to the castle constructed by millionaire, Albert Johnson. Built in the middle of the desert, the castle took ten years to complete.

**9**.

[ ] A. NO CHANGE

[ ] B. it’s

[ ] C. is

[ ] D . OMIT the underlined portion

**10**.

[ ] F. NO CHANGE

[ ] G. When you have driven to Dante’s Point, from the lake, a half hour’s drive,

[ ] H. A half hour’s drive from the lake takes you to Dante’s Point, where

[ ] J. After you are taking a half hour’s drive,

**11**.

[ ] A. NO CHANGE

[ ] B. desert—the

[ ] C. desert; the

[ ] D. desert: the

**12.** Which of the following sentences would best summarize Paragraph 2 on the various attractions of Death Valley?

[ ] F. Because of the intense heat, tours of Death Valley are not recommended during the summer.

[ ] G. Death Valley was formed millions of years ago.

[ ] H. Several Indian cultures have occupied Death Valley during the past 9,000 years.

[ ] J. Death Valley is a place of unexpected contrast.

**Passage 1 [3]**

Although Death Valley remains open all year, the summer months extending from May through October, is too hot to be enjoyable. Despite this extreme heat and lack of rain, various forms of life flourish; the many plants and animals living in Death Valley, and there are a large number of them, demonstrate Darwin’s theory that those who survive must adapt to their environment.

**13**.

[ ] A. NO CHANGE

[ ] B. Because

[ ] C. On account of the decision that

[ ] D . Due to the fact that

**14**.

[ ] F. NO CHANGE

[ ] G. months, extending from May through October, are

[ ] H. months, extending from May through October are

[ ] J. months extending from May through October are

**15**.

[ ] A. NO CHANGE

[ ] Valley, and there are a lot of them,

[ ] C. Valley

[ ] D. Valley, and the area also has a wealth of geological phenomena,

**Answer Analysis**

1. C grammar and usage

2. J sentence structure

3. B sentence structure

4. H grammar and usage

5. B sentence structure

6. J style

7. A sentence structure

8. H strategy

9. C grammar and usage

10. H strategy

11. A punctuation

12. J strategy

13. A organization

14. G punctuation

15. C organization