

## Strategies for ACT Reading Identifying Question Stems

### Referring Questions →

You can find the answer by **going** directly to the passage. They use very straightforward wording.

- "what does the second paragraph indicate about . . ."
- "according to the passage, . . ."
- "the passage clearly indicates . . ."
- "the passage says . . ."

### Reasoning Questions ☁

You can find the answer by **evaluating** the passage as a whole. A question that asks about the main thought of a passage calls for a different approach, perhaps rereading the passage's opening and closing paragraphs and inferring the author's purpose.

- "on the basis of information in the passage, which . . ."
- "infer from the passage that . . ."
- "the passage implies that . . ."
- "the passage suggests that . . ."
- "probably means that . . ."
- "one can conclude that . . ."
- "the main idea . . ."
- "the main thought . . ."
- "the primary purpose . . ."

On the actual test, answer first the types of questions you hardly ever get wrong on ACT practice exercises, perhaps the main idea questions or those that ask about specific details. Then devote the bulk of your time to the types that have given you more trouble.

*The order in which you answer the questions is completely up to you. You alone know which question types you usually handle with ease and which types give you trouble.*

**Remember:**  
**Answer general questions  
before  
detail questions.  
Do the easy passages first.**

Macomb ISD, 2010  
Source: Barron's ACT (2007)

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**ACT Reading Exam**  
**35 minutes — 4 passages**  
**10 questions per passage = 40 questions**

<i>Content Area</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i># of Questions</i>	<i>% of Test</i>
Prose Fiction	novel or short story	10	25%
Social Studies	anthropology, archaeology, business, economics, education, geography, history, political science, psychology and sociology	10	25%
Humanities	architecture, art, dance, ethics, film, language, literary criticism, music, philosophy, radio, television, and theater	10	25%
Natural Science	anatomy, astronomy, biology, botany, chemistry, ecology, geology, medicine, meteorology, microbiology, natural history, physiology, physics, technology, and zoology	10	25%
<b>Scoring:</b> Two subscores reported:			
	1) Prose fiction and Humanities	20 questions	
	1) Social Studies and Natural Science	20 questions	

Each passage is followed by 10 multiple-choice questions - 40 questions in all. You have approximately **9 minutes** for each passage.

**Fourteen** of the questions test what the passages say explicitly. These are what the ACT calls **referring** questions, because they "refer" precisely to what is stated in the passages.

Many more of the questions—**almost twice as many**—ask what the passage implies or suggests. The ACT calls these **reasoning** questions, because they call for answers that you must reason out by interpreting ideas, making generalizations, and drawing inferences and conclusions.

The ten questions about each passage are arranged according to level of difficulty, the easiest question being first and the hardest, last. The focus of the questions is objective—on what the author of the passage thinks and says—not on what readers believe the author ought to think or say.



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