

Studying Your Practice Test

Why Did You Get the Question Wrong?

There are three reasons why you might have gotten an individual question wrong:

- **Reason 1:** You thought you knew the answer, but you actually didn't.
- **Reason 2:** You managed to eliminate some answer choices and then guessed among the remaining answers; sadly, you guessed wrong.
- **Reason 3:** You knew the answer but made a careless mistake.

You should know which of these reasons applies to every question you got wrong.

If You Got a Question Wrong for Reason 1: Lack of Knowledge

A question answered incorrectly for Reason 1 identifies a weakness in your knowledge of the material tested on the ACT. Discovering this wrong answer gives you an opportunity to target your weakness. When addressing that weakness, make sure that you don't just look at the facts.

For example, if the question you got wrong covers the formula for the area of a circle, don't just look at that formula and memorize it. Take a quick look at circles in general, since if you were confused about this one topic, you might also be unsure about others related to it. Remember, on the real ACT you will *not* see exactly the same question as the one you got wrong. But you probably *will* see a question that covers the same topic as the practice question. For that reason, when you get a question wrong, don't just figure out the right answer to the question. Learn the broader topic of which the question tests only a piece.

If You Got a Question Wrong for Reason 2: Guessing Wrong

If you guessed wrong, review your guessing strategy. Did you guess intelligently? Could you have eliminated more answers? If yes, why didn't you? By thinking in this critical way about the decisions you made while taking the practice test, you can train yourself to make quicker, more decisive, and better decisions.

If you took a guess and chose the incorrect answer, don't let that sour you on guessing. Even as you go over the question and figure out if there was any way for you to have answered it without having to guess, remind yourself that you should always guess. It pays to engage in educated guessing by which you eliminate as many wrong answers as you can—even if educated guessing doesn't always result in your getting the right answer.

If You Got a Question Wrong for Reason 3: Carelessness

If you discover you got a question wrong because you were careless, it might be tempting to say to yourself, "Oh, I made a careless error," and assure yourself you won't do that again. That is not enough. You made that careless mistake for a reason, and you should try to figure out why. Whereas getting a question wrong because you didn't know the answer constitutes a weakness in your knowledge about the test, making a careless mistake represents a weakness in your *method of taking the test*.

To overcome this weakness, you need to approach careless errors in the same critical way you would approach a lack of knowledge. Study your mistake. Reenact your thought process on the problem and see where and how your carelessness came about. Were you rushing? Did you jump at the first answer that seemed right instead of reading all the answers? Know your error and look it in the eye. If you learn precisely what your mistake was, you are much less likely to make that mistake again.

If You Left the Question Blank

Since there is no penalty for wrong answers on the ACT, you should never leave a question blank.