The Simple ACT® Enhanced English Production of Writing Cheat Sheet

Production of Writing: The Basics

What It Tests

Production of Writing (POW): big-picture revision. Does the essay meet its **purpose**, stay on topic, and flow in a clear, logical order?
Topic Development: writer's goals, adding or deleting sentences, relevant details.
Organization: transitions, sentence & paragraph order, intros, conclusions, unity.
Not POW: word choice and tone = Knowledge of Language; grammar = Conventions.

Section at a Glance

Item	Enhanced ACT
Questions	50 (40 scored)
Time	35 min
POW share	38–43%
Language	18–23%
Conventions	38–43%
Wrong answers	No penalty

How POW Questions Look

Every Q has a stem: read it 1st. It tells you the job (goal, add/delete, order, transition).
Spot POW: "Which choice best...," "Should the writer add...," "most logical placement."
Field test: 10 of the 50 Qs don't count, but you can't tell which. Treat every one as real.

✓ Read the sentence before AND after the underlined part, not just the underline.

⚠ Good grammar isn't enough. Pick what the passage needs, not what sounds nice.

Purpose & Writer's Goal

Goal Questions

Stem: "Suppose the writer's goal was to... Would this essay do that?" → Yes/No + reason.
Step 1: decide Yes or No from the essay's **main focus**, not from 1 detail or 1 paragraph.
Step 2: pick the reason that truly describes what the essay does. Check it in the text.
Tip: cross off the 2 wrong verdicts 1st, then compare the 2 reasons that are left.

Goal says	Essay does	Answer
Broad history	1 person	No
Explain steps	Steps	Yes
Persuade	Describes	No
Tell a memory	Memory	Yes

Purpose of a Part

"Which choice best...": the stem names the job (e.g., "show contrast"). Match it exactly.
Function Qs: "The sentence serves to..." → name its role: example, contrast, background.
Example: goal = "show how a tool changed farming"; essay = one farmer's day → No.
Emphasis Qs: "most strongly shows X" → pick the most vivid, specific detail on X.
Map the essay: skim each paragraph's 1st line to find the **thesis** before any goal Qs.
Scope: goal and essay must match in size: 1 person's story ≠ a broad history of a field.

⚠ A "Yes" with a false reason is still wrong.

✓ Narrow essay + broad goal → usually "No."

Add, Delete or Keep

Relevance Questions

Stem: "Should the writer add/delete this?" Decide by **relevance** to the paragraph's main idea.
Relevant: supports the paragraph's main idea and links to the sentences before & after.

Situation	Verdict
Supports main idea	Add / Keep
Sets up next line	Keep
New topic	Delete
Repeats a point	Delete
Too much detail	Delete

Quick Checks

Delete check: read the paragraph without it. Nothing lost (or it flows better) → delete.
Keep check: a later "this" or "these" points back to it → keep it, or the logic breaks.
Reason: must describe the sentence correctly (e.g., "gives an example of X").
Wrong reasons: describe the sentence wrongly, or give it a role it doesn't play in the text.

Detail Questions

"Most specific detail": pick the concrete one (number, name, image) that fits.
Example Qs: the example must support THAT claim, not a nearby one or the topic.

⚠ "Interesting" ≠ relevant. Fun off-topic facts get deleted, even when they are true.

✓ Decide Yes/No yourself before reading the reasons; it cuts choices in half.

Topic & Thesis Sentences

Topic Sentences

Topic sentence: 1st sentence of a paragraph; previews ALL of it, not just 1 part of it.
Find it: read the paragraph, sum it up in a few words, then pick the matching opener.
Too narrow covers 1 detail. **Too broad** could open any paragraph in any essay at all.

Choice	Problem	Keep?
1 detail	Too narrow	No
Generic	Too broad	No
New topic	Off focus	No
Previews	Matches	Yes

Thesis

Thesis: the essay's main claim, often at the end of paragraph 1; every paragraph supports it.
Thesis Qs: "best states the main idea" → the choice that covers ALL body paragraphs.
Example: paragraphs on cost, safety, speed → the thesis must cover all 3, not just 1 of them.
Linking words: repeated names or ideas tie a choice to the text around it; check the logic too.
Bridge sentence: links the last paragraph's idea → the new paragraph's idea in 1 line.
Order of ideas: topic sentence → support → example → wrap-up. Keep that order.

✓ Summarize first, then match a choice.

⚠ Repeating paragraph words doesn't make a choice right; check the meaning.

Transitions

Pick the Logic First

Transition Qs: read both sentences → name the **relationship** → then pick the word.

Relationship	Words
Add	also, furthermore
Contrast	however, yet
Cause → effect	therefore, so
Example	for instance
Time	then, later
Summary	in short
Emphasis	in fact, indeed

Elimination Tricks

Twins: if 2 choices mean the same (thus/therefore), neither is right → cut both.
No transition: sometimes the best choice adds no word at all, if any link adds false logic.
Contrast check: do the 2 sentences disagree? If not, "however" and "yet" are wrong.
Direction: ↑ then ↓ = contrast; ↑ then ↑ = add.
Cause check: use "therefore" only if sentence 1 truly causes what sentence 2 says.

Between Paragraphs

Transition sentence: connects the last paragraph's topic → the next one.
Example: early failures, then success → "Despite these setbacks,..." links the 2 ideas.

⚠ Don't pick the fanciest word. Check the logic.

✓ Fill the blank w/ your own word, then match.

Sentence & Paragraph Order

Placement Questions

Stem: "The most logical placement for this sentence is after Sentence..." (choices 1–5).
Find the clue: a word (this, she, also, later) that points back to something earlier.

Clue	Means
this, these	Idea just before
he, she, they	Name comes first
also, another	Similar item before
then, later	After earlier event
the (named) X	X introduced
first	Near the start

Ordering Strategy

Plug it in: the right spot makes BOTH neighbors flow; reread the whole paragraph to check.
Time order: stories and processes follow dates, ages and step words (1st, next, finally).
General → specific: claim 1st, then an example, then the explanation of what it shows.

Paragraph Order

Paragraph Qs: check its 1st and last lines for links to the paragraphs before and after it.
Example: "These tools..." goes right after the sentence that names and lists the tools.

⚠ Placement Qs come at passage end. Answer them while that paragraph is fresh.

✓ A "she" sentence can't go before she's named.

Introductions, Conclusions & Unity

Intros & Conclusions

Intro: sets up the topic that follows.
Hooks: a question or short story works only if it leads right into the essay's topic.
Conclusion: ties back to the main idea; may echo the intro. Never adds a new topic.
Paragraph closer: wraps up that paragraph's point or bridges to the next paragraph.

Choice	Verdict
Echoes thesis	Strong
Links to intro	Strong
Adds new topic	Wrong
Generic moral	Too vague
Restates 1 detail	Too narrow

Unity & Cohesion

Unity: every sentence serves the paragraph's point; cut any sentence that doesn't.
New paragraph: starts where the topic, time, place or speaker clearly shifts to something new.
Final sentence: often echoes the intro's image or idea to close the loop on the essay.
Tone: match the essay (formal vs. personal).
Cohesion: ideas connect smoothly from sentence to sentence, w/ no sudden jumps.
Example: essay on a grandma's bakery → end back in her kitchen, not "baking is popular."

⚠ Dramatic, sweeping endings are usually traps.

✓ For a last sentence, reread the 1st paragraph.

Traps & Test-Day Plan

Common Wrong Answers

Trap	Why wrong
True, off topic	Not relevant
Right verdict, bad why	Reason is false
Longest choice	Wordy
Too broad/narrow	Misses scope
Repeats nearby words	Matches 1 line

4 Steps

1. Stem: name the job. **2. Context**: read the sentences before + after the underline.
3. Predict your own answer. **4. Eliminate** off-topic & wrong-logic choices, then pick.
Decide Yes/No before reading reasons on add/delete and goal Qs; saves time.

Pacing

Budget: ~7 min per passage. Grammar Qs fast, POW Qs a bit slower b/c they need context.
Stuck? Guess, flag, move on. No penalty.
Read the whole passage, not just the underlined parts. POW Qs need the flow of ideas.
Passage-end Qs: answer them right after reading the last paragraph, while it's fresh.
Practice: label each miss by type (goal, add, order, transition) → drill the weakest type.

✓ Torn between 2? Pick the one that fits the purpose most simply and directly.

⚠ Never leave a blank: no penalty for guessing.