The Ultimate 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 **logically**?
Topic Development: purpose, goal questions, add/delete/keep, relevance of details.
Organization, Unity & Cohesion: transitions, sentence/paragraph order, intros, conclusions.
vs. Knowledge of Language: KLA = word choice, concision, style, tone. **vs. Conventions**: grammar, punctuation, usage. POW = ideas, relevance, order & paragraph structure.

Section at a Glance

Item	Enhanced ACT
Questions	50 (40 scored)
Time	35 min (~42 sec/Q)
POW share	38–43% (15–17 scored)
Knowledge of Lang.	18–23%
Conventions	38–43%
Guessing penalty	None: answer all

How POW Questions Look

Every Q has a stem now: read it 1st. Stem names the job (goal, add/delete, order, transition, intro).
Spot POW: "Which choice best accomplishes…," "Should the writer add/delete…," "most logical placement," "best introduces/concludes," "most effective transition."
Field test: 10 of the 50 Qs are unscored but unmarked → you can't tell which ones, so treat all as real.
Score: English 1–36; composite = avg of English, Math, Reading. Science is optional, not in composite.

✓ POW answers live in context: read the sentence before AND after the underline, plus the paragraph's topic sentence, before you look at a single answer choice.

⚠ A grammatically perfect choice can still be wrong. POW asks 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 accomplish that goal?" → Yes/Yes/No/No + reason.
Step 1: decide Yes or No from the essay's actual **main focus**, not 1 detail → cross off 2 choices at once.
Step 2: pick the reason that **accurately describes** the essay. Right verdict + true reason = the answer.

Goal says	Essay does	Answer
Broad history	One person's story	No
Explain process	Steps in order	Yes
Argue/persuade	Mostly describes	No
Personal reflect.	Writer's memory	Yes

Purpose of a Part

"Which choice best accomplishes…": the stem names the purpose (e.g., "emphasize danger," "show contrast"). Match it word for word; ignore choices that do a diff. job.
Test each choice: does it do THE job named? Vague, off-target or half-done choices lose even if true.
Function Qs: "The sentence serves mainly to…" → name its role: example, contrast, transition, background, claim.
Sample: goal = "show how a tool changed farming"; essay = 1 farmer's day → No: it focuses on 1 person's routine, not broad change across farms or over time.
Emphasis Qs: "most strongly emphasizes X" → pick the choice w/ the most vivid, specific detail about X.

Reading for Purpose

Skim 1st lines of each paragraph → map: intro, body points, conclusion. Know the **thesis** before goal Qs.

⚠ Goal Qs: a "Yes" w/ a false reason is still wrong. Check the reason against what the passage really says.

✓ Narrow essay vs. broad goal (or broad essay vs. narrow goal) → almost always "No." Match scope 1st.

Add, Delete or Keep

Relevance Questions

Stem: "Should the writer add/delete this sentence?" → Yes/No + reason. Decide by **relevance** to paragraph focus.
Relevant = supports the paragraph's main idea, links to sentences before/after. **Irrelevant** = off-topic, repeats a point, or adds needless detail, even if interesting.

Situation	Verdict
Supports main idea	Add / Keep
Sets up next sentence	Keep
Shifts to new topic	Delete / Don't add
Repeats earlier point	Delete
Too detailed for focus	Delete

Picking the Reason

Good reasons: "gives an example of X," "explains why Y," "defines a term used later," "sets up the next point."
Bad reasons: misdescribe the sentence, name a role it doesn't play, or call a relevant detail "off topic."
Delete check: read the paragraph WITHOUT the sentence. If nothing is lost (or flow improves) → delete.
Keep check: if removing it leaves a gap (a later "this" or "these" points to nothing) → keep the sentence.
Logic check: deleting it leaves a "but" or "so" w/ nothing to point back to → keep it; the logic needs it.

Detail & Support Qs

"Most specific detail": pick the concrete one (number, name, image) that fits the stem's purpose, not just any.
Example Qs: "Which choice gives an example that supports the claim?" → the example must illustrate THAT claim, not a nearby one or the paragraph's general topic.

⚠ "Interesting" ≠ relevant. A fun fact that drifts from the topic is the classic wrong "Yes, add it."

✓ Before reading reasons, decide Yes/No yourself in 5 sec. Cuts choices in half; then check the reasons.

Topic & Thesis Sentences

Topic Sentences

Topic sentence: 1st sentence of a paragraph; previews what the paragraph covers. Must match ALL of it.
Find it: read the rest of the paragraph first → summarize in 3–5 words → choose the matching opener.
Too narrow: covers only 1 detail. **Too broad**: could open any paragraph. **Just right**: names the paragraph's point.

Thesis / Main Claim

Thesis: essay's main claim, usually end of 1st paragraph. Every body paragraph must support it directly.
Thesis Qs: "Which choice best states the main idea of the essay?" → pick one that covers all body paragraphs.
Sample: body paras on cost, safety, speed of trains → thesis must cover all 3, not just safety or cost.

Choice type	Problem	Keep?
Restates detail	Too narrow	No
Vague, generic	Too broad	No
New topic	Off focus	No
Previews para.	Matches	Yes

Linking Paragraphs

Bridge sentence: best opener nods to the last paragraph AND introduces the new one (old idea → new idea), e.g., "Beyond lower cost, the trains also proved safer."
Key words: look for repeated nouns, names or ideas that tie a choice to the text around it; then verify the logic.
Cohesion check: read last line of para A + chosen opener of para B. Should feel like one continuous thought.
Order of ideas: topic sentence → support → example → wrap-up. Choices that break this order are wrong.

✓ Summarize, then match: write the paragraph's point in your head before looking at choices.

⚠ A choice that repeats words from the paragraph can still be wrong if it only matches 1 sentence.

Transitions

Pick the Logic First

Transition Qs: read the sentence before + the sentence with the blank → name the **relationship**, then pick the word.

Relationship	Words
Add / same way	also, furthermore, likewise
Contrast	however, yet, instead
Cause → effect	therefore, thus, so
Example	for instance, e.g.
Time / sequence	then, later, finally
Emphasis	indeed, in fact
Concession	even so, still, granted
Summary	in short, overall

Elimination Tricks

Same-meaning choices: if 2 choices mean the same (*thus*/*therefore*), neither is right → cut both.
No transition: "DELETE" or plain start is right when the link is obvious or a transition adds false logic.
Contrast check: do the 2 sentences disagree? If not, any "however"-type word is wrong (yet, but, instead).
Direction check: ↑ then ↓ = contrast; ↑ then ↑ = addition; cause then result = effect; claim then case = example.
Punctuation clue: "however" mid-sentence needs commas; if choices differ only in punctuation, it's a Conventions Q.

Transition Sentences

Between paragraphs: best transition sentence connects the previous topic → the next one, naming both.
Sample: para 1 on early failures, para 2 on success → "Despite these setbacks,…" links both.

⚠ Don't pick the fanciest word. "Consequently" is wrong if sentence 2 isn't caused by sentence 1.

✓ Cover the choices, fill the blank w/ your own word, then match its category. Twins and wrong logic fall away.

Sentence & Paragraph Order

Placement Questions

Stem: "The writer wants to add this sentence. Most logical placement is after Sentence…" or "Sentence 4 should be placed…" Read the sentence before the choices.
Find the anchor: the sentence has a clue (pronoun, "this," "also," time word) that points back to something earlier.

Clue	Means
this, these, such	Refers to idea just before
he, she, they, it	Noun must come first
also, too, another	Similar item came before
then, after, later	Follows earlier event
the (named) X	X already introduced
first, to begin	Near paragraph start

Ordering Strategy

Plug it in: read the sentence in each spot; the right spot makes BOTH neighbors flow, w/o a dangling "this."
Chronology: narratives and processes go in time order; dates, ages and step words (1st, next) are clues.
General → specific: claim 1st, then example, then explanation. A detail can't come before the claim it supports.
Cause → effect: event first, then its result. Problem → solution order is common in informational essays.

Paragraph Order

Paragraph Qs: "For logic and coherence, Paragraph 3 should be placed…" → check its 1st and last lines for links.
Sample: added sentence starts "These tools…" → place it right after the sentence that lists the tools.

⚠ Placement Qs often sit at the end of a passage. Answer them as soon as you finish that paragraph, while it's fresh, not after reading 4 more paragraphs.

✓ Pronouns are the fastest clue: a "she" sentence can't go before she's named; "they" needs a plural before it.

Introductions, Conclusions & Unity

Best Introduction

Intro sentence: sets up the topic of what follows. Pick the choice that previews the paragraph or essay.
Hooks: a question or anecdote is fine IF it leads straight to the topic. Off-topic or gimmicky hooks lose.
Essay title Qs: rare; same rule applies: match the whole essay's focus, not the topic of 1 paragraph.

Best Conclusion

Conclusion: ties back to the main idea; may echo the intro's image or phrase. Never adds a new topic.
Paragraph closer: wraps up THAT paragraph or bridges to the next. Must fit what came just before.

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

Unity & Cohesion

Unity: every sentence serves the paragraph's point.
Cohesion: ideas connect smoothly, sentence to sentence.
Splitting paragraphs: "Where should a new paragraph begin?" → where the topic, time, or speaker shifts.
Tone fit: intro/conclusion choices must match the essay's tone (formal vs. personal) and point of view.
Sample: essay on a grandmother's bakery → strong close returns to her kitchen, not "baking is popular worldwide."

⚠ Dramatic, sweeping endings ("and the world was never the same") are usually traps: too broad for the essay.

✓ For a final sentence, reread the essay's 1st paragraph: the answer often links back to its image or claim.

Traps & Test-Day Plan

Common Wrong Answers

Trap	Why wrong
True but off topic	Fails relevance
Right verdict, bad why	Reason misreads
Longest / fanciest	Wordy, adds logic
Repeats nearby words	Matches 1 line
Too broad or narrow	Misses the scope

POW Decision Steps

1. Read the stem: name the job (goal, add/delete, order, transition, intro, conclusion) before the choices.
2. Read context: sentence before + after, plus the paragraph's topic sentence; know what the part must do.
3. Predict: answer in your own words, or decide Yes/No yourself, before reading any of the 4 choices.
4. Eliminate: cut off-topic, too broad/narrow and wrong-logic choices. Pick the best fit for the purpose.

Pacing

Budget: ~7 min per passage. Grammar Qs fast (~30 sec each) → bank that time for POW Qs (~50 sec each).
Read the passage as you go; don't skip text between questions. POW Qs need the flow and the main idea.
Stuck? Guess, flag, move on. No penalty for wrong answers; return to flagged Qs only if time remains.
Practice: after each set, label misses by type (goal, add/delete, order, transition) → drill the weakest.
Final pass: answer passage-end POW Qs (writer's goal, placement) right after reading the last paragraph.

✓ When torn between 2, pick the one that fits the paragraph's purpose most directly and says it most simply.

⚠ Never leave a blank. In the last 2 min, bubble a guess for every unanswered Q; a blank is a guaranteed 0.