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ACT Reading Review Packet

- Read any introduction that is given to you and then read the passage for 30-60 seconds. Don't read every detail; just try to get a quick sense of what the passage is about.
- Most students should not try to read the whole passage at first simply because they will usually not have enough time to read the whole passage and then answer most of the questions. So...
- Read quickly with a purpose- After taking ten seconds to read the introduction, the next thing to do for each reading passage is to read through some of the passage quickly looking for the answers to three main questions:
 - What was the author trying to do when he or she wrote this passage? In other words, what was the purpose? To inform? To persuade? To entertain?
 - What is the main idea of this passage? What is this passage really about?
 - What is the author's opinion of the subject they are writing about? Are they supportive of the subject? Against the subject? Do they like the subject?
- *Use process of elimination!* On the ACT, there are only 4 answer choices on the reading section. Try to quickly cross out the two choices that seem the worst. Once you have narrowed it down to two choices, it is easier to focus on the two that are left and decide which choice fits the specific lines better.
- *When a question references lines numbers, read more lines than you think you need to.* For example, if a question tells you read lines 10 – 12, it is a good idea to go back and quickly re-read lines 6 – 16 because the best clue is often 3 or 4 lines above what they tell you or 3 or 4 lines below what they tell you to go back to.
- Watch out for tricky wrong answers that make perfect common sense but are not mentioned in the passage. If it is not mentioned in the passage or even if it is mentioned but not focused on, it can't be the right answer.
- Key to answering questions: Go back to the passage! Don't be lazy and just try to answer all of the questions by simply remembering what you read. You must discipline yourself to go back to the passage to find the answers to each of the reading questions. The answer to every reading question can be found in the passage. Sometimes you will need to go back to a part of the passage two or three times to finally get an answer. Often they will not actually write the answer to a

question in the passage; however, if you carefully read the passage, the answer will be there even though it is not actually written.

- It is essential that you read every question carefully and understand clearly what each question is asking. Many students miss questions just because they do not read the question carefully and do not take an extra few seconds to make sure they know what the question wants them to find. Keep in mind that the reading section of the ACT does not go in order of difficulty from easiest to hardest. Don't be discouraged if a question is very difficult, the next one may be much easier.
- Strategy for "Vocabulary-in-Context" questions- Some of the reading questions on the ACT look something like this:
 - Ex. 2: The word "complete" (line 11) most nearly means
 - a) comprehensive
 - b) whole
 - c) finished
 - d) extreme
 - e) absolute

We will call these types of questions vocabulary-in-context questions because the questions are asking you about the definition of a vocabulary word based on the context the word is in. On these types of questions, the vocabulary word can mean any of the five answer choices based on what type of context it is in. In the above example, "complete" can mean either "comprehensive", "whole", "finished", "extreme", or "absolute" based upon how it is used. The biggest mistake students make on these types of questions is they pick the definition they are most familiar with. In the above example, many people choose (C) because they are used to seeing "complete" mean finished. You cannot solve these questions by picking the definition you are most familiar with. The key is to go back to the passage to find what the word means.

To answer "vocabulary-in-context" questions, the best strategy to use is to treat them like they are sentence completion questions. Read the passage beginning a few lines above the line that the word is in. When you get to the vocabulary word that the question is asking about, read it as the blank in a sentence completion question. As you read past the word, immediately begin thinking about what word you would use in the blank. When you have an idea in your head about what word you would use in the blank, go to the answer choices and look for a word that means nearly the same thing as the word you have chosen. If there seems to be more than one answer choice that is correct or if none of the answer choices seem to jump out at you, then put a line through the answer choices that you are sure definitely don't fit and go back to the passage to try and get a fresh idea of what word you might put in the blank.

- Answer Traps- There is a trap that the ACT loves to set for students on the reading section. They love to leave answer choices that give a reasonable answer to the question but which are not mentioned in or supported by the reading passage. In other words, questions will have answers that are true but are not supported by the passage and therefore are wrong. Here is an example. This question was based on a passage written by a supporter of democracy:

- Ex. 3: One of the major implications of the passages is that
 - a) a country based upon political and economic freedom will prosper
 - b) political parties are troublesome
 - c) having one political party eliminates greed and corruption
 - d) economic freedom is necessary for a country's prosperity but must be carefully monitored
 - e) political parties ensure that no one group will deny people their rights

Answer choice (a) is a perfect example of an answer choice that gives a reasonable answer to the question. It seems like any supporter of democracy would agree with answer choice (a). However, if this type of statement is not mentioned in or supported by the passage, then this answer choice cannot be correct!

- To summarize, many students ask: What lines should I read?- Often on reading questions, the question will tell you to look at a certain group of lines for an answer. Here is an example:

- Ex. 1: In lines 20-24 (“The forests...beyond everything”) the author is doing which of the following?

On a question like this, it is essential that you begin reading a few lines above line 20 and a few lines past line 24. In other words, read a few lines above the section they tell you to read and a few lines below the section they tell you to read.

Usually it is very difficult to get the correct answer to these questions just by reading the lines they tell you to read. This may sound somewhat sneaky, but they often place a few very helpful clues to these questions in the lines above what they tell to read and in the lines below what they tell you to read. In the example above, reading lines 16-28 will give you a very good idea about what the author is doing in lines 20-24.

- There are four distinct types of reading passages on the ACT reading section and knowing the differences will help you determine how to approach them.

Prose Fiction:

These passages read like excerpts from novels. The focus of these passages will generally be the emotions of the characters and the tone of the writing. What are the characters feeling? How are they acting, and why? What is the author trying to reveal about the characters? The events that transpire in these types of passages are important, but your main focus should be on the emotional trajectory of the characters and the dynamics of their relationships.

Humanities:

These passages analyze ideas or works of art. You'll want to pay close attention to the author's point of view in these passages because it will most likely be distinct and essential for answering many of the questions. Instead of being asked to understand the relationships between characters, like you will be in the prose section, you'll be asked to

analyze the relationships between events, ideas, people, ways of thinking, fads, and other concepts.

Social Studies:

These passages will basically deal with information gathered from research. You'll want to focus on notable figures and the concepts attached to them, as well as cause and effect relationships between important people and events. Social studies passages do not generally have a strong point of view from the author and rather let the information speak for itself. Details are important to note in this one.

Natural Sciences:

These passages discuss science topics and why they are notable. While they are obviously much different from prose passages, they are still concerned with relationships: relationships between natural occurrences, experimentations, or other science-related activities. Pay close attention to cause and effect relationships and the sequences of events. Details do matter in these passages, but don't get bogged down in the specialized language. If the term is really important, the passage will define it for you.