

Argument Outline

Please look at these questions:

- Is an ACT score connected to success rates in college or career?
- Is GPA connected to success rates in college/career?
- If you do poorly (get a D or C) in your first years of high school, can you raise your GPA sufficiently to gain admittance to a competitive school?
- What's an index score and how do those affect college admission?
- see notes and rubric between outline and resources
- I can definitely see a difference between this first draft and the last one!! Nice work

Thesis: The ACT should not play as big a role as it does when it comes to college selection compared to GPA and a high school resume because those two things show your development as a person more than the ACT does.

1. Hook

- a. Four hours. 36 points. 215 questions.
- b. From the time you're a little kid, you hear about the ACT, either from TV or parents. It's just one of those things you pick up. You hear about this giant, life deciding test that chews up high school juniors and spits them out. But, when you're little, you think, "When I'm that old, I'll know how to do it, I'll know what I'm doing." But, then you get here, and you realize with a sudden and sharp clarity that you, and everyone around you, really has no idea what's going on. You're taking a test that could decide where you spend the next 4+ years of your life, or could save you thousands of dollars through scholarships. And, while you're mind's buzzing over how many questions you have to answer, you start to think, "Why, in the name of God, does a four hour test matter more to college boards than what I've been doing for four years?"
- c. The ACT shouldn't matter as much as it does.

2. History

- a. The American College test is a multiple choice college admissions and placement test scored from 0 to 36 taken by more than 1.8 million high school graduates every year (What ACT Does).
- b. The ACT was started in 1959 by E.F. Linguist, a professor at the University of Iowa (ACT History).
 - i. The test was something new, and focused on the skills that students were taught in school, rather than on cognitive (knowledge, attention, and working memory) thinking (ACT History).
 - ii. The SAT already existed, but with more people wanting to enroll in college and with more and more colleges seeking higher enrollment for money, the need for another college centered standardized test arose (ACT History).

- iii. Created to test college bound students in four basic areas: math, English, science, and reading (American College Test).
- c. Colleges need national tests that are scored collectively to assess students on an equal level.
- d. The average ACT score in Salida is 24, and the national average is 26 (Salida High School Educational Outcome).

3. Refutation/Concession

- a. The ACT is important for several reasons.
- b. High School (The ACT Student Web Account)
 - i. Advising and counseling students
 - ii. Evaluating the effectiveness of instruction
 - iii. Identifying students who need assistance with certain subject areas or academic skills
 - iv. Planning changes and improvements in the curriculum
- c. Colleges (The ACT Student Web Account)
 - i. Admissions decisions - Deciding if a students will benefit from the programs offered.
 - ii. Course placement - Seeing which subjects a student excels in and which they need help in, and which college classes to put them in based off of that.
 - iii. Academic advising - Similar to course placement, shows where students need to be helped, and shows where they should aim their academic future.
 - iv. Scholarships and loans - Based off of your score, you can get scholarships at many schools, with the higher the score, the more money you save.
- d. The ACT is something nationwide, and so the grading scale applies to all states and all schools, therefore all students (ACT Facts).
- e. State's grading is based off of their standards, which vary.
 - i. Persuasive writing is a state standard for 11th graders in Colorado (Colorado Academic Standards).
 - ii. Persuasive writing isn't a state standard for 11th graders in California (California Common Core State Standards).
- f. In high School, grades can be fiddled with depending on your situation.
 - i. There have been cases in my life where I haven't done an assignment, and have instead worked out something different with the teacher separately.
 - ii. Situations like this ^ happen often in our school, and every other high school. Sometimes, students can get more or less credit than they deserve based off of human error
- g. The ACT provides a national consistency that can't be messed with.

4. Confirmation/Defense

- a. The ACT shows a student's development in English, math, science, and reading (American College Test), but it does not account for other things.
 - i. A survey done on college alumni of independent college and public university graduates showed what they thought as most important going into college and into life (Making the Case, Charts, Data, and Resources).
 1. Solving problems and making effective decisions: I-73% P-62%.
 2. Self confidence and initiative: I-68% P-56%
 3. Developing the ability to learn new skills: I-66% P-52%
 4. Relating to people of different backgrounds:I-62% P-42%
 - ii. While the ability to write effectively is on the list, it is ranked lower than the previously mentioned skills, none of which are tested by the ACT.
- b. Placing a student's future on one test isn't a very smart thing to do if that student is a "bad test taker".
 - i. A bad test taker is someone who achieves high grades on in class work and homework, but low grades on tests, because of the anxiety associated with them (Poor Test Takers?).
 - ii. It has been found that 10% of students reach a panic level high enough to cause clinical anxiety and force their brains to chemically shut down (Poor Test Takers?). Making those students, however small the demographic take a test with this much sway on their life is more than a little cruel.
 - iii. For those who argue against bad test takers, saying that it's only a matter of studying, how does one study for the ACT? It's accumulated knowledge from the previous years of high school. This means that you've been studying for two and a half years. And a product of those two and half years is your GPA. So, why not just look at that instead of a test?
- c. Environmental factors: Having a bad day.
 - i. The ACT is a four hour test. If a student goes in to take the test and is not having a very good morning, ie. they missed breakfast, got a flat tire, had a fight with their parents, then they might not be so focused for, lets say, an hour of the test. That means that 25% of the test, they weren't doing their best.
 - ii. The average for school days by the time a student graduates is around 708, and that breaks down to about 3,800 hours of instructional time. If a student has, lets say, 100 "bad day" hours, that means that a student wasn't doing their best 2.6% of the time (Time in School: How does the US compare?).
 - iii. That's 25% vs 2.6%.
 - iv. The room for error, and the room for life in general, is much bigger when it comes to a four year long commitment than a four hour long commitment.
- d. A students can only take the ACT 12 times (The ACT Student Web Account).
 - i. Students have each and every school day improve their GPA, which means that they have approximately 177 chances to improve themselves,

not counting summer classes or weekends (Time in School: How does the US compare?).

- ii. That's 177 compared to twelve. Big difference.
- e. The ACT has been scientifically shown to predict how students do in college, but the test in its entirety is not the best indicator.
 - i. In a study published by Eric P. Bettinger, Brent J. Evans, and Devin G. Pope in the American Economic Journal, an equation was created.
 - ii. This equation was used to predict students' first year of College GPA based off of their scores in each ACT test (Improving College Performance and Retention the easy Way: Unpacking the ACT Exam).
 - iii. It was discovered that the only tests that could accurately and significantly predict how a student would do in college, which is a large reason why colleges look at ACT scores, were math and English.
 - iv. This means that the science and reading tests do nothing to show colleges how a student will fair at their school. These tests, collectively, take up 70 minutes of the school day. That's time that could be spent on improving a high school GPA and is wasted on information that isn't useful.
- f. The ACT doesn't account for many necessary skills, doesn't account for bad test takers, is subject to a far higher percentage of environmental influence, can only be taken 12 times, and is not wholly effective in predicting a student's future.

5. Conclusion

- a. The ACT has its purpose, but it shouldn't be taken above GPA and high school accomplishments, because it is far less representative of a student's work ethic and ability to interact with the world around them than something with that much importance should be. Your worth shouldn't be decided by a number generated in four hours. It should be decided by your accomplishments and your cumulative GPA, which instead of showing you as a number, shows you as more of a person.

Argument Outline Bibliography

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This website gave me the history of the ACT, how it was created, why, and how it was accepted into society.

"The ACT Student Web Account ..." *A Student Site for ACT Test Takers*. ACT Inc., n.d. Web. 28 Apr. 2015.

From this website, I gained basic information about how the test is administered, how the scores are used, and retake information.

“American College Test.” *Eduers*. 2009. Web. 27 Apr. 2015.

This website gave me information about what the ACT contains and what the acronym stands for.

Bettinger, Eric P., Brent J. Evans, Devin G. Pope. “Improving College Performance and Retention the easy Way: Unpacking the ACT Exam”. National Bureau of Economic Research. June 2011. Web. May 2, 2015.

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This website showed me the state standards for English in California.

"Colorado Academic Standards." Colorado Department of Education. 2010. Web. 28 Apr. 2015.

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This site told me the statistics on test anxiety and explained the counter argument against it.

Hull, Jim. "Time in School: How does the US compare?" Center for Public Education. Dec. 2011. Web. 28 Apr. 2015.

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"Making the Case Charts, Data, and Resources." *Important Life Skills*. The Council of Independent Colleges, n.d. Web. 27 Apr. 2015.

This website showed me what skills college alumni thought were most important in college.

"Salida High School Educational Outcome." Niche. 2015. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

I used this website to find out the national average score of the ACT and average for Salida High School.

"What ACT Does." ACT Inc. 2015. Web. 27 Apr. 2015.

This website told me how many students take the ACT yearly and which students those are.