We invite educators, administrators, and policymakers to learn about ACT Aspire™ by viewing the collection of sample computer-based test (CBT) questions online and in this booklet. The questions illustrate a variety of content from across grade bands and show different types of test questions and formats. This booklet also explains the concepts being measured and provides an answer key for the exemplar questions.

The exemplar ACT Aspire test questions should be accessed online with a desktop or laptop computer rather than a tablet or smartphone. Please note that the platform in which the questions are currently housed does not represent the final platform on which the ACT Aspire assessment will be delivered.

**Login Information**

To view the exemplar ACT Aspire CBT questions online, visit [tn.actaspire.org](http://tn.actaspire.org). Usernames and passwords for the various subject areas can be found in the following table.

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**Technical Support**

For technical support related to this exemplar set of ACT Aspire CBT questions, please contact us by phone at 888.802.7502 or by email at actaspire_implementation@actaspire.org.

**Additional Information**

For more information about the ACT Aspire assessment system, visit [www.discoveractaspire.org](http://www.discoveractaspire.org).
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Introduction

ACT Aspire™ English tests assess students’ developed ability to revise and edit texts. A typical English test contains several stimuli, or texts, and a series of selected-response and technology-enhanced questions. Texts used in the assessments represent various content areas (including English language arts, the humanities, and the social and natural sciences), and, considered collectively, reflect a range of text complexity levels from simple to complex, as appropriate for students’ age and educational attainment. The questions fall under the following reporting categories.

Conventions of Standard English
The questions in this category require students to apply an understanding of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics to revise and edit text.

- **Punctuation Conventions**
  These questions require students to edit text to conform to standard English punctuation.

- **Usage Conventions**
  These questions require students to edit text to conform to standard English usage.

- **Sentence Structure and Formation**
  These questions test understanding of relationships between and among clauses, placement of modifiers, and shifts in construction.

Production of Writing
The questions in this category require students to apply an understanding of the rhetorical purpose and the focus of a piece of writing to develop a topic effectively; to use various strategies to achieve logical organization, topical unity, and general cohesion; and to employ knowledge of language to ensure that writing is precise, concise, and stylistically consistent.

- **Topic Development**
  These questions require students to demonstrate an understanding of and control over the rhetorical aspects of texts by identifying the purpose of parts of texts, determining whether a text has met its intended goal, and evaluating the relevance of material in terms of a text’s focus.

- **Organization, Unity, and Cohesion**
  These questions require students to use various strategies to ensure that text is logically organized, flows smoothly, and has an effective introduction and conclusion.

- **Knowledge of Language**
  These questions require students to demonstrate effective language use through ensuring precision and concision in word choice, maintaining consistency in style and tone, and using references.
**Answer Key**

The following pages show the sequence number, grade, question type, depth-of-knowledge (DOK) level, alignment to the ACT Aspire reporting categories, and correct response for each question. The pages also include explanations of the questions and the correct responses.

**Passage A: “Cycling About”**

The ACT Aspire English assessments employ various passage types to present a variety of rhetorical situations. This social science passage is of appropriate complexity for the ACT Aspire Early High School (EHS) English assessments.

**Question 1**

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This selected-response question requires students to recognize and revise a rhetorically incorrect sentence fragment (aligns with the Common Core State Standards’ College and Career Readiness anchor standard [CCRA] W.5, L.1). The length and complexity of the sentence containing this question requires the student to read the entire sentence carefully in order to recognize that it lacks an independent clause, resulting in a sentence fragment. Students must then select a revision to the sentence that eliminates the fragment.

**Explanation for Correct Response**

Answer option D is the only option that creates a sentence that contains an independent clause. Answer options B and C create sentences that lack independent clauses, which would also result in sentence fragments.

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This selected-response question requires students to identify and correct text that does not conform to conventions of Standard English punctuation (aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.5). Specifically, students must determine whether commas should or should not be used to set off a sentence element based on whether the element is restrictive or nonrestrictive. Students must also demonstrate the ability to use punctuation correctly to set off a nonrestrictive element. To answer this question, the student must read the entire sentence carefully in order to determine if the French craftsman’s name (Pierre Michaux) is essential to the meaning of the sentence. Once this is determined, the student must select the answer option that correctly applies the rules of standard English punctuation.

Explanation for Correct Response
The French craftsman’s name is essential to the meaning of this sentence; if it were removed, the sentence would read “By the 1860s, French craftsman had designed….” The name “Pierre Michaux” is, therefore, a restrictive element and should not be set off by commas.
Question 3

This selected-response question requires students to identify and correct language that does not conform to conventional ways of expressing ideas in standard English (aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.1). After reading the sentence carefully, students must identify the highlighted phrase as an idiomatically nonstandard expression. Students must then select an answer option that conforms to the conventions of standard English expression.

Explanation for Correct Response
Answer option C, “known,” properly completes the idiomatic standard English expression “known as.”
This selected-response question requires students to develop and focus text through the revision of information (aligns with CCRA.W.4, W.5). To answer the question, students must read the entire sentence carefully and select the answer option that accomplishes the specific rhetorical purpose outlined in the question (a purpose aimed at providing more precise information about the idea being developed).

Explanation for Correct Response

Of the available answer options, the phrase “dangerous tipping hazard” is the most precise option and the only one that fulfills the rhetorical purpose outlined in the question (if the rider must sit high up on the bicycle, there is the potential for the bike to tip).
Question 5

This selected-response question requires students to evaluate the relevance of material to a text given the text’s focus (aligns with CCRA.W.4, W.5). To answer the question, students must read the entire paragraph carefully and determine which answer option would provide information most relevant within the context of the paragraph and the essay.

Explanation for Correct Response

The first sentence of the last paragraph is about both the failure to make high-wheel bicycles safe and the introduction of “safety” bicycles; the last two sentences are about the reception and popularity of the new bicycles. One way to make the sentence containing question 5 relevant would be to include additional information about the “safety” bikes themselves. Answer option B speaks specifically about features of the safety bicycle that improved safety (equal-sized wheels, reliable brakes) and speaks to the comfort/accessibility of the bike (rubber tires, frames that allowed men, women, and children to ride). Of the available options, B provides the most relevant information to the paragraph and the essay.
Question 6

**Sequence** | **Grade** | **Question type** | **DOK level** | **ACT Aspire reporting category** | **Correct response**
---|---|---|---|---|---
6 | EHS | Selected Response | 3 | Production of Writing | C

This selected-response question requires students to make a decision about where a proposed sentence should be placed within the text as a whole (aligns with CCRA.W.4, W.5). In order to answer this question, students must read and have a general understanding of the entire text. Students must then determine the best placement for the proposed sentence based on logic and cohesion, avoiding placements that are illogical or weaken the organization of the text.

**Explanation for Correct Response**

The proposed addition mentions “incredibly large front wheels” and describes the advantage of this development to riders. In order to maintain the logic and cohesion of the text, the best placement option is within the paragraph about the “high-wheel” bicycle, which specifically mentions the “huge front wheel.” Placement C comes immediately after a description of the high-wheel bicycle and is, therefore, a logical placement that maintains the cohesion of the paragraph and the essay.
Passage B: “Ghost Bird”
This natural science passage is of appropriate complexity for the ACT Aspire Grade 8 English assessments.

Question 7

This selected-response question requires students to recognize and revise a run-on sentence (two or more independent clauses joined without proper punctuation and/or conjunctions; aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.1). The student must read through this complex sentence and recognize that the sentence contains two independent clauses joined only by a comma, resulting in a comma splice. The student must then pick the answer option that does not create another comma splice.

Explanation for Correct Response
Answer option D is the only option that correctly replaces the independent clause in the highlighted portion with a dependent (introductory) clause. Because an independent clause immediately follows the highlighted portion, the first part of the sentence must either be a dependent clause or an independent clause followed either by a comma and a coordinating conjunction or by a semicolon. Answer options A, B, and C create comma splices because they include independent clauses followed only by a comma.
Question 8

Ghost Bird

study zoology at Cornell University in New York, he returned in the late 1950s to search the islands for the bird. He found eighteen nesting pairs. 

Wingate knew that its current breeding habitat—burrows created in fragile limestone cliffs—was threatened by hurricanes, rising sea levels, and erosion.

Over a period of years Wingate, as Bermuda’s conservation officer, transformed an elevated, uninhabited eleven-acre Bermuda island that was unpopulated, called Honduras. into a haven for this endangered species. He restored native flora and created dozens of sturdy, soil-filled burrows, providing the cahow with safe nesting places. Speakers played prerecorded cahow calls to attract the first birds. Soon, there were eight pairs of cahows nesting on Honduras Island.

Wingate feels, however, that there is no sound more beautiful than the haunting cries of the cahow—the unrelentingly reappearing “ghost bird” as he calls it—again filling the Bermuda night sky. In 2009, eighty-six nesting pairs on Honduras Island produced dozens of healthy chicks that left their burrows to fly out to sea. Many of these birds returned to Honduras to make nests of their own.

Given that all the choices are accurate, which one most clearly emphasizes how close the cahow was to extinction when Wingate began his project?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. some of the pairs having made sturdy nests in the cliffs.
- C. likely the cahow’s entire breeding population.
- D. more cahows than he had expected to find.

This selected-response question requires students to develop and focus text through the revision of information (aligns with CCRA.W.4, W.5). To answer the question, students must read the entire sentence carefully and select the answer option that accomplishes the specific rhetorical purpose outlined in the question (a purpose aimed at providing more precise information about the idea being developed).

Explanation for Correct Response

Answer option C is the only option that satisfies the rhetorical purpose outlined in the stem. The stem calls for a statement that emphasizes “how close the cahow was to extinction.” Answer option C, within the context of the sentence, calls attention to the fact that the entire breeding population of the cahow was likely limited to eighteen nesting pairs. Answer options A and B offer statements that aren’t related to the cahow’s closeness to extinction, and option D would seem to indicate that the cahows were more plentiful than expected.
This selected-response question requires students to identify and correct text that does not conform to conventions of Standard English punctuation (aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.5). Specifically, students must demonstrate the ability to use punctuation correctly to set off a nonrestrictive element. Students must also identify punctuation that is not necessary to or actively interferes with meaning.

**Explanation for Correct Response**

Answer option B includes a comma after the introductory clause “Over a period of years” and correctly uses parallel punctuation in order to set off the nonrestrictive element “as Bermuda's conservation officer” with commas. Answer options C and D lack parallel commas and therefore do not correctly set off the nonrestrictive element. Answer option A includes an unnecessary comma between the possessive proper noun “Bermuda's” and the element this noun modifies (conservation officer).
Question 10

This selected-response question requires students to recognize and revise instances of redundancy in text (aligns with CCRA.W.4, W.5, L.3). Students must read the entire sentence carefully, identify the redundancy in the highlighted portion, and select the answer option that eliminates this redundancy.

Explanation for Correct Response

Answer option D is the only choice that does not unnecessarily repeat information provided elsewhere in the sentence. It also eliminates wordiness.
Question 11

This selected-response question requires students to determine if a transition word ties two paragraphs together logically (aligns with CCRA.W.4, W.5). To answer the question, students must carefully read the preceding paragraph and the sentence containing the highlighted portion in order to determine which answer option provides the most logical transition between the two paragraphs.

Explanation for Correct Response
Because answer options A, B, and C all introduce transition words that do not flow logically from the preceding paragraph, answer option D provides the most logical transition by removing unnecessary connective words.
Question 12

This selected-response question requires students to form a possessive adjective using the conventions of standard English, distinguishing possessive forms from contractions and adverbs (aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.1). Relying on the context of the sentence, students must identify the need for a possessive adjective in the highlighted portion and choose the correct possessive form from among the answer options provided.

Explanation for Correct Response

Answer option C correctly identifies the possessive adjective “their” (referring back to the plural noun “chicks”).
Passage C: “Pie Through the Ages”
This social science passage is of appropriate complexity for the ACT Aspire Grade 6 English assessments.

Question 13

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This selected-response question requires students to recognize and revise a run-on sentence (two or more independent clauses joined without proper punctuation and/or conjunctions; aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.1). The student must read the text surrounding the highlighted portion carefully in order to recognize that the highlighted text incorrectly combines two independent clauses with only a comma (creating a comma splice). The student must then pick the answer option that corrects this error while preventing the introduction of other errors.

Explanation for Correct Response
Answer option B corrects the comma splice by separating the two independent clauses into two separate sentences.
This selected-response question requires students to identify and correct language that does not conform to conventional ways of expressing ideas in standard English (aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.1). After reading the sentence carefully, students must identify the highlighted word as an idiomatically incorrect use of a preposition. Students must then select an answer option that conforms to the conventions of standard English expression.

Explanation for Correct Response

Answer option B is the best option because the preposition “like” is idiomatically appropriate here; it also creates a logical comparative relationship between dough and pots. All other answer options are idiomatically incorrect.
This selected-response question requires students to identify and correct text that does not conform to conventions of standard English punctuation (aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.2). Specifically, students must demonstrate the ability to use punctuation correctly to set off a nonrestrictive element. They must also identify punctuation that is not necessary to meaning or actively interferes with meaning.

**Explanation for Correct Response**

Answer option C correctly uses parallel punctuation to set off the nonrestrictive element “which were quite ready to be freed” with commas. Options A and D lack parallel commas and therefore do not correctly set off this nonrestrictive element. Option B lacks commas altogether and therefore does not correctly set off this nonrestrictive element.
Question 16

This selected-response question requires students to identify and correct text that does not conform to conventions of standard English punctuation (aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.2). Specifically, students must demonstrate the ability to use punctuation correctly to separate elements within a series.

Explanation for Correct Response

Answer option A correctly uses a comma after each element in the series. Options B, C, and D all omit necessary commas required by conventions of standard English punctuation.
This selected-response question requires students to establish the clearest and most precise way of expressing information or ideas in a text (aligns with CCRA.W.4, W.5, L.3, L.6). To answer this question, students must read the entire sentence that contains the highlighted word and determine which answer option provides the most clear, precise, and logical expression of an idea.

**Explanation for Correct Response**

Based on the examples provided in the sentence (possum or vinegar), answer option C, “ingredients,” is the most logical and precise word choice. Answer option A is incorrect because cooking utensils are never mentioned. Answer option B is incorrect because the term “features” is too broad. Answer option D is incorrect because the settlers’ share of the pie is never mentioned.
This selected-response question requires students to make a decision about where a proposed sentence should be placed within a particular paragraph (aligns with CCRA.W.4, W.5). In order to answer this question, students must read and have a general understanding of the entire paragraph. Students must then determine the best placement for the proposed sentence based on logic and cohesion, avoiding placements that weaken the organization of the paragraph or are illogical.

Explanation for Correct Response

Answer option B is the best choice. The proposed sentence refers to “these settlers,” who are introduced in the first sentence of the paragraph. Also, since the proposed sentence includes information about the value of pie, it logically connects to the sentence that follows Point B. Placement at Point A is incorrect because the reader wouldn’t know which “settlers” the proposed sentence is referring to. Placement at points C and D are also incorrect because the proposed sentence, if placed at these points, would interrupt the logical temporal flow of the paragraph.
Passage D: “Vegetable Magic”
This humanities passage is of appropriate complexity for the ACT Aspire Grade 4 English assessments.

Question 19

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This selected-response question requires students to identify and correct several problems related to nouns, pluralization, and possession (aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.2): forming possessive nouns correctly, using context to determine whether to use a possessive or plural noun, and using context to determine whether to use a singular or plural possessive noun.

Explanation for Correct Response
Only answer option B correctly uses the singular possessive form of the noun “orchestra.” Answer option A is a plural, nonpossessive noun, option C is a plural possessive noun, and option D is the singular, nonpossessive form of the noun. Within the context of the sentence, options A, C, and D all provide incorrect forms of the noun.
Question 20

The Vienna Vegetable Orchestra is creating a new, unusual sound with its music. This group performs music by playing vegetables. The orch*stra*5e strange instruments beep, vuv, squawk, and trump. Before each show, the orchestra members shop for fresh vegetables. Then, the musicians CAR*e4*4 cut and carve the food with knives. Sometimes they use a drill, too. As members work, a carrot becomes a flute, and a pepper changes into a horn, a pumpkin is transformed into a fine bass drum. The members of the orchestra enjoy the taste, smell, and look of their ingredients. They also enjoy sharing their special songs with others. The songs are influenced by many different styles, such as jazz, electronic, and pop music.

After watching a Vienna Vegetable Orchestra performance, Audience members have another delight waiting for them. The orchestra has a cook who makes a delicious soup from all of the vegetables. An evening with the Vienna Vegetable Orchestra is a truly remarkable experience.

What change, if any, should be made to the highlighted word?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. most careful
- C. carefully
- D. more careful

Explanation for Correct Response

Answer option C is the only option that correctly uses an adverb to modify the verb “cut.” Answer options A, C, and D all incorrectly modify “cut” with a nonadverbial form of “careful.”
Question 21

This selected-response question requires students to recognize and revise a run-on sentence (two or more independent clauses joined without proper punctuation and/or conjunctions; aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.1). The student must read through this sentence carefully, recognizing that it contains two independent clauses joined only by a comma (creating a comma splice). The student must then pick the answer option that corrects the error.

Explanation for Correct Response

Answer option B is the only option that corrects the run-on sentence by splitting it into two sentences. Answer option A creates a comma splice, answer option C deletes an unnecessary comma but still creates a run-on, and answer option D moves the comma but still creates a run-on.
Question 22

This selected-response question requires students to identify and correct faulty subject-verb agreement (aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.1). The student must read through the sentence and recognize that the verb “loves” does not agree with the subject of the sentence, “members.”

Explanation for Correct Response

Answer Option B is the only option that corrects the agreement error by using the correct form of the verb “to love.” Answer options A and C use forms of the verb that would agree with a singular, not a plural, subject. Answer option D creates a sentence fragment.
This selected-response question requires students to form a possessive adjective using the conventions of standard English, distinguishing possessive forms from contractions and adverbs (aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.1). Relying on the context of the sentence, students must identify the need for a possessive adjective in the highlighted portion and choose the correct possessive form from among the answer options provided.

Explanation for Correct Response
Option A is correct because “their” is modifying “special songs,” so the possessive adjective is used correctly. Options B and C incorrectly substitute contractions for the possessive adjective. Option D incorrectly substitutes an adverb (there) for the possessive adjective.
**Question 24**

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This selected-response question requires students to correctly use a comma to set off a long introductory element from the rest of the sentence (aligns with CCRA.W.5, L.2). The student must read through the sentence carefully, recognizing that the first part of the sentence creates an introductory element. Students must then choose the correct answer from among options that introduce ambiguity and create rhetorically ineffective fragments.

**Explanation for Correct Response**

Answer option C is the only option that correctly sets off an introductory element from the rest of the sentence. Answer option A creates a sentence fragment; answer option B does not set off the introductory clause with a comma, which creates an ambiguity in meaning; and answer option D both creates an ambiguity and has an unnecessary comma after “audience.”