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About 33% of the ACT maths section requires you to know and use at least one math formula. This means that remembering your formulas and understanding how to use them is paramount. We've put together all the ACT formulas you need to know (priorities are in order from the highest to the least you'll see them on the test) and how best to use them for test day. What formulas will you need in the ACT? You won't be given any formulas in the ACT, so all your knowledge of the formula should come from your own head. You will need to know and use a wide range of formulas, including algebraic, geometric and trigonometry formulas, all of which are outlined in our guide to 31 formulas you should know for the ACT. You will notice that we have prioritized them according to the need to know and know well. This is because many ACT issues can be solved with long hands or more common formulas rather than forcing you to memorize more obscure formulas. For example, you can solve sequence issues by using a formula or calculating values with a long hand. While it will take longer to resolve the long-handed issue, it is still possible to resolve every ACT sequence issue without using a formula. So we classified the sequence formula as well to know and not need to know. If you feel rust on any formula or math theme on the list, check out one of our individual math thematic guides to see how the formula works (and even why it works) and how to recognize when to use it. We'll also show you alternatives to using formulas for many questions, including distance issues, consistency issues, and more. There are many different correct ways to address the issues in the ACT Maths section. How to effectively use your formulas, so now that you know what your formulas are, how best to go about using them? Let's see. #1: Priority memorizing the most important formulas you'll have to remember every formula you use in the ACT, but it's best to go about it in a systematic and logical way. Spend most of your time and energy remembering and practicing the most important (common) formulas and less time on those that are rare, if at all. Some formulas come over and over again, while others arrive sparingly at best. If you're pressed on time, nervous about memorizing so many formulas, or just trying to map out your attack plan, remember your formulas in the order that they appear more often on the test. From your required formulas, they appear on the test from the highest prevalence to the lowest in about this order. Law: the sum of the interior angles of a triangle is 180 Area Triangle Act: the sum of degrees straight line 180 rectangle area (or other four-sided) Pythagorean theorem theorem tilt of this line (rise/run) Search for a slope line connecting the two points Search percent Law: the number of degrees of arc in the circle is 360 Area Circle Circle Finding Medium Sinus, Kosin, Tangy (SOH, CAH, TOA) Area of circle circle circle Circle Circle Search for probability Search combinations Search mid-line Volume of rectangular solid volume of the cylinder Area Trapeze-shaped equation Secant, Co of Formulas is good to know or short of the way, you'll need them around in that order: #2: Choose now, which (if any) of your well-to-know formulas you want to remember remembering the formula is wrongly worse than not remembering the formula at all, so make sure you know your limits when it comes to remembering. For some people, memorizing and using formulas is the easiest way to go. For others, the fewer formulas the better (even if it means another step or two to solve a mathematical problem). There is no correct answer in terms of how many formulas you remember, just what is most comfortable for you personally. And when it comes to memorizing formulas, different people are better off with different memory techniques. If you're a visual learner, make yourself a set of flash card formulas. If you are a throwy (movement) student, practice drawing and/or writing them out on a separate piece of paper. And if you're an auditory student, get a parent or friend to help you drill your formula out loud. Once you feel that you have your formulas down, practice using them on actual problems to help you both remember them and learn how to use a specific formula for a particular problem. (We'll give you the opportunity to practice using your formulas on real ACT maths in the next section.) #3: The practice of ACT math questions at home without looking at your formulas The only way you're going to be able to remember your formulas for crunch time (and know which formulas to actually use for individual problems) is to practice on real ACT maths issues without a safety grid. Once you feel that you have your formula nailed down tightly, practice solving ACT math problems without looking at your formula. We have a list of all the free act mathematical practice you can find online and you will be able to use any and all of these problems to not only test your knowledge of the formula, but also your mathematical knowledge of the topic. Once you have gone through your practice problems without the benefit of being able to search for your formulas, you will be able to identify your strengths and weaknesses of the formula. Have you repeatedly forgotten the Pythagoras theorems? What about trigonometry formulas? It's better to understand where to move your focus now than to be blind day of the test. Divide your time between mechanical memorization and problems without using formulas, and you will be able to strengthen the knowledge in your head most effectively. #4: When you get to the math section, immediately write down your formulas If you're worried about forgetting your formulas halfway through the test, or if you just like the idea of the reverse option, it's always a good idea to write down your formulas at the very beginning of your math test. Once you have them written down, you can focus on solving your problems without being afraid to remember your formulas incorrectly or forget them completely. So once you open your math section, write down all your memorized math formulas and take a deep breath. Now you can move on and use them as a reference for the rest of your math section. #5: Don't worry if you forget the formula the most, don't panic if you forget the formula (or three) Most of all ACT problems can be solved in a variety of ways, including by connecting answers or connecting your own numbers. And if the worst gets worse and you can't solve the problem without a formula, you'll still probably be able to eliminate at least one or two options. Remember - you're not punished for guessing in the ACT, so always take the risk. And if you can narrow down your options, even better! Let's look at an example of how to narrow down your choice of answers if you forget the formula. For a question like this, you don't have to understand how trapezoidal work or remember any triangle formulas in order to eliminate at least three answer options. We are asked to find the distance between our two parallel sides, so draw a straight, perpendicular line between them. That makes the right triangle. Again, without knowing your formulas, you can just take a hit in the dark and appreciate how long the side is. Remember - all the numbers in the ACT should scale unless stated otherwise, and this line looks about the same length (maybe longer, maybe less) as the 5 foot we are given. Without knowing more information, we can eliminate the choice of answers D and E. Now, maybe you will stay here and choose between choosing the answer A, B and C. This will give you a 33% chance to guess the correct answer, which is not too bad at all. But if we go further, you will remember that the opposite of the right corner is the longest side of the triangle, which means that the distance between our parallel lines should be less than 5. So we can eliminate the choice of C response as well. So we had a chance to get the right 1 to 3 answer with no knowledge of the formula at all, and now we have a 1 in 2 chance, just knowing a little bit about how the right triangles work. And even now, we can make an educated (rather than random) guess between our two remaining answer choices. Again, all ACT figures should scale, if not different, and, at first glance, the distance between our parallel bases looks like longer than the third leg of the triangle. Maybe it is, maybe it isn't, but we have a 50% chance and the choice of answer B looks like the best choice between them. Without using formulas we can conclude that the answer is probably B. Note: just to let you know B is absolutely the right answer. Go, you! Now it's time to put your knowledge formula to work! ACT Math Practice Using Formulas Now that you've seen how best to use your ACT formula, let's take a look at a few real ACT maths questions that are formula-necessary. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. Answers: D, F, J, J, B Answer Explanation: 1. Because the dog can run on a leash 9 feet in any direction, this means that the 9 foot radius of the circle in which the dog can run. Now we are asked to find the area of this circle. If we recall our formulas circle, we know that we find the area using the formula: $\$a \$2 \$a \$9 2 \$a \$\pi \$t \3.14 (which we are given), so: $\$81 (3.14) \$254.34 \$$ The nearest answer to this is the value of the answer is D, 254. 2. If we remember our trigger formulas, we know our mnemonic SOH, CAH, TOA. Thus, the tangent is the opposite/adjacent. In this case we are looking for a tangent B. The adjoining side is the side that touches the angle, which is not hypotenuse. In this case, the adjoining side for corner B 2, which means that this is our denominator. This means that we can eliminate the choice of answers H, J and K. If we use the Pythagoras theorem, we can find our missing lateral measure. $\$a 2 \times 2 \times 2 \$2 \$a 2 \times 2 \times 2 \$2 \$a x 2 \times 4$ and $\$25 \$a \$21 \a and $\sqrt{21} \$$ Our opposite side will be $\$/21 \21 and we've already established that our neighboring side is $\$2$. Our final F answer, $\$/21/\23 . We can solve this problem in one of two ways - by using more common triangle formulas, or by using more obscure ones. If we use common triangle formulas, we know that the inner corners of the triangle will always add up to 180 degrees. This means that we can find the missing angle measurements by subtracting all our known angles from 180. $\$180 - 72 - 57$ and $\$51$ now, we also know that each straight line is 180 degrees as well. So we can find the outer corners by subtracting each of our corners from 180. $\$/y - \$180 - \$72 \$y - \$108 \$x - \$180 - \$57 \$x - \$123 \$z - \$180 - \$51 \$z - \$129$ we can now find the amount of $\$/y$, $\$/x$, and $\$/z$. $\$/108 y + 123 - 129 - \360 Our final answer - J, 360. In addition, we can use our more obscure triangle, which is that each outer angle is the sum of two opposite inner angles. For example, $\$/z \72 and $\$/57 \$z \$129$ from here, we can solve the problem just like we did above. $\$/x - 72 - 51 \$x - 123 \$y - 51 - 57 \$y - 108 \$x - y + z 129 - 123 - \360 Anyway, our final answer is J, $\$/360$. 4. If we remember our slope formulas, we know that the line equation: $\$/y = mx + b$ $\$/m \$m \$m$ tilt the line, and the more $\$/m$, the larger the slope. In our first equation, $\$/a \$$ stands in place of our $\$/m \$$ and our slope. In the second equation, $\$/c \$$ stands in place $\$/m \$$ and our slope. So if the tilt of our first equation is greater than the slope of our second equation, then $\$/a \$$ should be more than $\$/c$. Our final answer is J, $\$/a c \$$. 5. Now our shape is in the middle of the square, which means that all sides are equal. The two sides of the area that make up part of the perimeter are $\$/8$ and $\$/8$ and $\$/16$. Now we just need to find a part of the perimeter, made up of two semicircles. If we put them together, we can do a full circle. We know that circle circumference: $\$/c$ and $\$/d$ $\$/ Dimeter$ of our circle is $\$/8$, so our full circumference will be $\$/8 \$$ Now let's put our two values together: $\$/16$ and $\$/8$ Our final answer B, $\$/16$ and $\$/8 \pi$ $\$/Who!$ You did it! Image: Sean MacEntee/Flickr Take-Aways Knowing (and Knowing How to Use) Your Formula is one of the fundamental elements of doing well on the ACT maths section, but that's just one part. While formulas are used in some form at about 33% of the ACT math test, this still leaves 66% of your questions that don't require formulas at all. So take care to understand (and remember!) your most important formulas, but don't think that's all you need to do to succeed in the ACT Maths section. You still need to understand all and every matter all and every one of these ACT maths topics that you'll see on the ACT, so don't neglect the rest of your ACT maths study. A balanced learning plan, knowledge of your formulas and more than fleeting familiarity with all your ACT maths topics will help you get your math score back to where you want it to be. What's next? Want to brush up on the ACT maths theme? Check out our individual math guides for all your ACT math needs. Running out of time on the act math section? We will show you how to beat the clock and maximize your score before time runs out. Were there delays on your ACT mathematical research? Our guide will help you balance your study time and discourage the desire to postpone. Aiming for the perfect result? Check out our guide to getting 36 in the ACT Mathematics section, written by the perfect scorer. Want to improve your ACT score by 4 points? Check out our best-in-class online ACT training program. We guarantee your money back if you don't improve your ACT score by 4 points or more. Our program is completely online and it customizes what you are learning to your strengths and weaknesses. If you liked this math lesson, you'll love our program. Along with more detailed lessons, you'll get thousands of practical challenges organized by individual So you'll learn most effectively. We will also give you a step-by-step program to follow, so you will never be confused about what to learn next. 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