ACT Reading practice pack

12 original questions on a literary passage and paired opinion passages, with evidence and explanations for every choice. Includes a printable PDF.

SHARP

Find the passage's answer

Read each passage, then answer its questions without opening the key. For each choice you make, mark the sentence or detail that supports it. For a question about both passages, find support in each one.

ACT Reading asks you to read closely, reason from evidence and connect information across texts. This pack gives you focused practice with those tasks. Begin untimed; use a full official practice test separately to rehearse section pacing.

For details and inferences

Take the question's most specific words back to the passage and read the surrounding sentences. A choice can repeat a passage detail and still answer the wrong question. For an inference, identify what the text supports without supplying a new event or motive.

For paired passages

Test a proposed shared claim against Passage A and Passage B separately. If it fits only one, it cannot answer a question about both. A difference must also get both sides right.

Worked example: check both accounts

Account A: A volunteer photographed each donated map before cataloging it.
Account B: A volunteer measured each donated map before cataloging it.

Both volunteers recorded information about the maps before cataloging them. Only A mentions photographs; only B mentions measurements. The shared claim can use broader wording, but it still needs evidence from both accounts.

Set 1 has one literary passage and six questions. Set 2 has two opinion passages and six questions. These are original practice selections, not a full ACT section or a score estimate. Check the explanations after each set and use the final worksheet to decide what to practice next.

Set 1: the repair notebook

Original literary narrative by Sharp. Paragraph numbers are provided for practice. Use the passage for questions 1–6.

[1] On the first Saturday I helped at the neighborhood repair shop, I arrived with a notebook divided into neat columns: object, problem, solution. My aunt Lena had asked me to record the repairs while she worked. I expected the third column to fill as quickly as the first two. By noon I had written 'radio: silent' four times, and none of the four radios had made a sound.

[2] Lena did not seem troubled. She opened each case, set the screws in a saucer and drew a small diagram before touching the wires. When I offered to copy her diagram into my notebook, she shook her head. 'Leave room for what we don't know yet.' I had already ruled the columns in ink. I turned the page.

[3] The next visitor brought a desk lamp with a crooked shade. He set it down carefully and said it had belonged to his sister. Lena asked when it had last worked. He couldn't remember. I wrote 'lamp: broken' and reached for the next line, but Lena asked him to show us what happened when he switched it on. He pressed the switch. The bulb lit, flickered and went out. Lena watched his hand rather than the bulb.

[4] She unplugged the lamp and examined the switch. I leaned closer, waiting for her to name the faulty part. Instead she asked me to describe what I had seen. 'It flickered,' I said. 'When?' I tried the sentence again: 'It stayed on while he held the switch, then went out when he let go.' She nodded. For the first time that morning I felt that writing something down had advanced the repair.

[5] While Lena replaced the switch, the visitor told us that his sister had used the lamp beside her sewing machine. The shade had been crooked for as long as he could remember. I offered to straighten it. He smiled and said he preferred it that way. In my notebook I crossed out 'broken' and wrote 'switch fails to stay on.' Beneath that, outside any column, I added 'leave shade alone.'

[6] At closing time, only one radio was working. The other owners had agreed to return the following week, when Lena hoped to have found the parts she needed. I had filled six pages with descriptions, sketches and questions. My original columns occupied half of the first page. I did not redraw them. Before leaving, I looked over the three unfinished radio entries and added a space beside each for what we would try next.

Questions 1–3

Refer to set 1: the repair notebook. Choose one answer per question. Note the paragraph or phrase that supports your choice.

Question 1

The passage mainly describes the narrator's shift from:

A. wanting to repair objects to wanting to collect them.
B. admiring Lena's work to doubting her ability.
C. expecting quick, tidy answers to recording observations and open questions.
D. disliking note-taking to preferring it over all other work.

Evidence / working:

Question 2

Why does the narrator write 'leave shade alone' in paragraph 5?

A. Lena lacks the tools needed to straighten the shade.
B. The lamp's owner says he prefers the shade as it is.
C. Straightening the shade would damage the new switch.
D. The narrator has promised to repair the radios first.

Evidence / working:

Question 3

In paragraph 2, Lena's instruction to 'Leave room for what we don't know yet' most nearly asks the narrator to:

A. prepare to record uncertainty as the work proceeds.
B. reserve a separate column for the cost of parts.
C. avoid writing anything until each object works.
D. copy the diagram more accurately.

Evidence / working:

Questions 4–6

Refer to set 1: the repair notebook. Choose one answer per question. Note the paragraph or phrase that supports your choice.

Question 4

Lena's response to 'It flickered' in paragraph 4 suggests that she wants the narrator to:

A. name the replacement part without examining the lamp.
B. ask the owner to leave while she works.
C. stop describing the lamp and draw it instead.
D. connect the observed problem to the action occurring when it happens.

Evidence / working:

Question 5

As used in paragraph 4, 'advanced' most nearly means:

A. moved forward physically.
B. made progress on.
C. scheduled for an earlier time.
D. made more complicated.

Evidence / working:

Question 6

The narrator's decision to add space beside the unfinished radio entries primarily shows that the narrator:

A. expects Lena to finish the radios before closing.
B. plans to discard the first day's notes.
C. has begun to use the notebook to guide continuing work.
D. has decided that the lamp was the day's only worthwhile repair.

Evidence / working:

Set 2: a library tool cabinet

Two original opinion passages about an invented library proposal. Use both for questions 7–12.

Passage A

[1] A neighborhood library is considering a cabinet of tools that residents could borrow. Supporters have proposed filling it with whatever equipment people donate. That approach would give the library an impressive inventory quickly, but the number of tools on a shelf would tell us little about whether the cabinet was useful. A tool that nobody knows how to maintain may spend more time awaiting repair than out on loan.

[2] I would begin with a short list chosen from residents' requests, then accept only tools that library staff can inspect and maintain. A volunteer has offered twenty garden rakes. We should thank her, but we should first find out how many borrowers need one. If the cabinet's space is limited, keeping twenty copies of a rarely requested tool could mean turning away equipment people would use each week.

[3] Borrowing records should guide later purchases. If a tool is repeatedly reserved while other tools sit untouched, that is a reason to buy another copy. The first inventory need not settle the question for good. Starting with a manageable collection would let the library learn from its borrowers before committing its budget and storage space.

Passage B

[1] The proposed tool cabinet could give residents access to equipment they use too rarely to buy. Its success, however, will depend on more than selecting useful tools. A borrower might reserve the right drill and still return home unable to use it. We should consider the instructions and help that accompany each loan before opening the cabinet.

[2] A basic demonstration could show how to fit a drill bit, secure it and stop the tool. Written instructions would let borrowers check those steps later. Neither would turn a beginner into an experienced carpenter. For unfamiliar jobs, staff should help borrowers identify the instruction they still need instead of treating the loan itself as sufficient preparation.

[3] This work takes time. I favor opening with fewer kinds of tools so that staff can prepare clear instructions and learn which questions borrowers ask most often. As the collection grows, demonstrations and written guidance should grow with it. A cabinet crowded with tools but offering no practical help would meet only part of the need it was meant to address.

Questions 7–9

Refer to set 2: a library tool cabinet. Choose one answer per question. Note the paragraph or phrase that supports your choice.

Question 7

Both authors would most likely agree that the library should:

A. accept every donated tool.
B. buy additional copies based on reservation records.
C. offer a demonstration with every tool loan.
D. begin with a collection it can support before expanding.

Evidence / working:

Question 8

In Passage A, the example of twenty garden rakes is used to illustrate why the library should:

A. check demand before accepting tools that will occupy limited space.
B. avoid lending gardening equipment to residents.
C. ask every donor to provide written instructions.
D. give duplicate tools to other libraries immediately.

Evidence / working:

Question 9

According to Passage B, a basic demonstration and written instructions would:

A. eliminate the need for any further instruction.
B. make every borrower an experienced carpenter.
C. help with initial steps while leaving some jobs in need of further instruction.
D. remove the need for staff time as the collection grows.

Evidence / working:

Questions 10–12

Refer to set 2: a library tool cabinet. Choose one answer per question. Note the paragraph or phrase that supports your choice.

Question 10

Which comparison best describes the authors' main concerns?

A. A focuses on teaching tool use; B focuses on deciding which donations to accept.
B. A focuses on selecting and maintaining a useful collection; B focuses on helping borrowers use it.
C. A argues against the cabinet; B argues for replacing the library with a workshop.
D. A favors a large inventory immediately; B favors lending only garden tools.

Evidence / working:

Question 11

Which proposed action most directly follows the recommendation in Passage A's final paragraph?

A. Preparing a demonstration on how to fit a drill bit
B. Accepting a donated tool because its owner wants it removed
C. Buying a tool without checking whether anyone needs it
D. Buying a second copy of a tool that is repeatedly reserved

Evidence / working:

Question 12

The rake example in Passage A and the drill example in Passage B serve a similar purpose by:

A. showing why having tools available may not be enough to meet borrowers' needs.
B. establishing that residents already know how to use the donated equipment.
C. proving that the library cannot afford a tool cabinet.
D. showing that all donated tools require repair.

Evidence / working:

Answers 1–4

1. C · Follow a change in perspective

A. The narrator never proposes collecting objects. The notebook records other people's repairs.

B. Unfinished repairs do not cause the narrator to reject Lena's methods. The narrator adopts them.

C. Correct. Paragraph 1 expects the 'solution' column to fill quickly. Paragraph 6 ends with sketches, questions and space for further attempts.

D. The narrator arrives prepared and willing to take notes. The passage does not compare note-taking with all other work.

2. B · Locate the reason

A. No missing tool is mentioned. The reason comes from the owner's response.

B. Correct. Immediately before the note, the narrator offers to straighten the shade and the owner says he prefers it crooked.

C. The passage gives no mechanical connection between the shade and the switch.

D. The narrator makes no such promise. The radio work is separate from the owner's preference.

3. A · Interpret a statement in context

A. Correct. The rigid columns assume each problem will have a ready solution. Lena's instruction allows for observations and questions before a repair is complete.

B. Parts appear later, but Lena says nothing about prices or a cost column.

C. Lena asks for room to record more, not a delay in recording anything.

D. She declines the offer to copy her diagram. Accuracy of that copy is not her request.

4. D · Make a supported inference

A. Lena asks for a more precise observation, not an unsupported diagnosis.

B. Nothing in the exchange suggests dismissing the owner.

C. Lena's question 'When?' requests more detail in the description, not a drawing.

D. Correct. The narrator links the light going out to the owner releasing the switch, making the description useful for the repair.

Answers 5–8

5. B · Read a word in context

A. The narrator leans closer, but 'advanced' describes the repair, not a physical movement.

B. Correct. The more precise observation helps the repair proceed. 'Made progress on' preserves that meaning.

C. No appointment or schedule changes in this paragraph.

D. The sentence describes a useful contribution, not added complexity.

6. C · Explain the ending's function

A. The owners will return the following week. The added space is for later attempts.

B. The narrator keeps and expands the existing entries.

C. Correct. The space is explicitly for 'what we would try next.' It puts the day's lesson about open questions into practice.

D. The narrator returns to the radios rather than dismissing them. No ranking of worthwhile repairs is offered.

7. D · Check both passages

A. A explicitly questions accepting whatever is donated. B does not endorse that approach.

B. A recommends using borrowing records. B does not address buying duplicate tools.

C. B favors demonstrations and guidance, but A does not discuss them. 'Every tool loan' also exceeds B's stated plan.

D. Correct. A wants a manageable collection that staff can maintain; B wants fewer kinds of tools while staff develop instruction. Both favor a supported, limited start.

8. A · Keep a detail with its purpose

A. Correct. A asks how many borrowers need a rake, then explains that rarely used duplicates could displace useful equipment.

B. A questions the number of rakes, not whether any gardening tool belongs in the collection.

C. Written instructions are discussed in B. A makes no such request of donors.

D. Neither passage proposes transferring donated tools to other libraries.

Answers 9–12

9. C · Match the strength of a claim

A. B explicitly says staff should help borrowers identify instruction they still need.

B. B says neither form of help would make a beginner an experienced carpenter.

C. Correct. Paragraph 2 gives basic steps the demonstration could teach and then limits what that preparation accomplishes.

D. Paragraph 3 says this work takes time and should grow along with the collection.

10. B · Compare the main concerns

A. This swaps the passages' concerns.

B. Correct. A discusses demand, maintenance and purchases. B discusses demonstrations, written guidance and borrowers' remaining instructional needs.

C. Both discuss how to operate the cabinet. Neither proposes closing the library or abandoning the cabinet.

D. A argues against using inventory size as the measure of success. B never restricts the cabinet to garden tools.

11. D · Apply a passage's recommendation

A. This follows B's advice about instruction, not A's final recommendation about purchases.

B. A wants borrowing needs to guide the collection, not the donor's wish to dispose of an object.

C. This omits the evidence of demand that A asks the library to collect.

D. Correct. A says repeated reservations are a reason to purchase another copy. The action uses borrowing records as evidence.

12. A · Compare how examples support claims

A. Correct. A's rakes may not match demand; B's drill may be unusable to a borrower without instruction. Both examples expose a limit of availability alone.

B. B's example specifically allows that a borrower may not know how to use a drill. A does not discuss residents' skills.

C. A mentions a budget, but neither example proves the project unaffordable.

D. A raises maintenance as a concern, but the rake example does not say the rakes are broken. B discusses instruction, not a broken drill.

Review your work

Check every missed question and every answer you guessed. Find the exact evidence before reading the explanation again. Record the error and choose a specific task for your next session.

Your practice review

Question / your choice	Evidence you missed	What to do next

My next practice task:

Date to revisit these questions without the key:

For a longer record, use the ACT study plan and mistake log. If you want more practice on the skills you missed, Sharp Pro includes targeted ACT skill practice.

Sources and preparation

Scope checked against ACT's Reading test description, November 5, 2026. Methods were cross-checked with Sharp's ACT curriculum. All passages, data and exercises in this pack are original Sharp teaching material; this is not an official ACT test.

Prepared by Sharp with AI assistance. Human editorial review is pending.