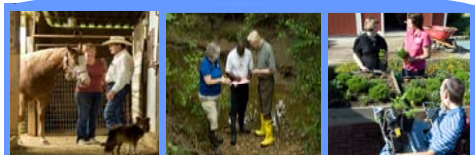


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# Making a Difference In Tarrant County



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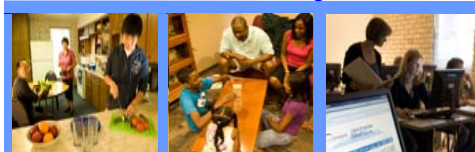
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You can find us on Facebook at:  
[www.facebook.com/agrilife.tarrant](http://www.facebook.com/agrilife.tarrant)



## Volunteers

**CelebrateService**  
National Volunteer Month  
April 2015



Total Volunteers:  
**1198**

Value of  
Volunteer Time:  
**\$1,841,185**

Full Time  
Equivalent: **39**

National Volunteer Month, is about inspiring, recognizing and encouraging people to seek out imaginative ways to engage in their communities. It's about demonstrating to the nation that by working together, we have the fortitude to meet our challenges and accomplish our goals.

Source: [pointsoflight.org](http://pointsoflight.org)

### Year-Round Volunteers

**398**  
Master Gardeners

**195**  
4H Leaders

**131**  
Program Area  
Committees

**67**  
Master Naturalists

**24**  
Texas Extension Education  
Association (TEEA)



**Thank You Volunteers!**







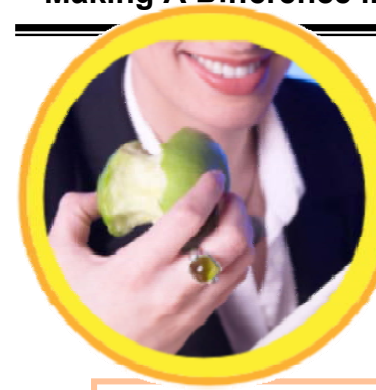
# Take the Steps: Dig Yourself Out of Debt

Marian Ross, M. S.  
County Extension Agent  
Family and Consumer Sciences

How easy is it to get in over your head with debt? For some families (and singles) getting into debt can be quite easy - growing children, helping out a family member(s), spending habits that are difficult to change, or a family crisis such as a loved one's death or medical problem. How easy it is to get into debt, however, just because you're in debt now doesn't mean you have to stay in debt. Whether you're in serious trouble or just want to pay down or off some bills, consider these steps as part of your action plan to get out of debt.

1. **Complete a net worth statement.** Know what you own (assets), what you owe (liabilities) and see if it is lining up with your financial goals. Then make a list of ALL debts you owe, starting with the most critical (mortgage or rent) to the less critical. Then review your checking account and list all of the items that you have gone shopping for that weren't "necessary". Can you identify areas that need to change? Can't find any? Start and continue tracking your spending and build a spending and savings plan to help you put your action plan to work.
2. **Put away the plastic.** STOP using your credit cards immediately. Do not transfer any more balances. Do not use the checks from the credit card companies. Stop taking on more debt.
3. **Call creditors before skipping payments.** If you are unable to make a payment, call the company before you decide to skip a payment. Be honest and let them know when you will be making a payment. Most companies will work with you, keep your cool and they will too. Remember, keep your family safe, pay your mortgage and car payments in full.
4. **Avoid settlements, charge-offs and credit repair scams.** There is no such thing as an "easy" fix to getting out of debt or repairing a bad credit report. Stay away from services that require upfront fees or "voluntary contributions", guarantee that they can make debts go away or promise you will only pay pennies on the dollar. *Buyer Beware* - if you agree to work with these groups, be sure to read the contract you will be signing, they may hold you to more than they do for you. If the company asks for money upfront or for credit card numbers or your personal information or want to place you into a debt management plan and they haven't had the opportunity to analyze your situation - WALK AWAY.
5. **Mail your payments early.** Ok, don't laugh, some people still utilize the post office for mailing bills. Mail your bill in at least 7 days before its due. Paying electronically? Pay 2-3 days ahead of due date. A continuous record of late payments can affect your credit score.
6. **Bankruptcy shouldn't be an option.** A very painful last resort - it has long term consequences and may not provide the debt relief you seek. There are many financial burdens that cannot be placed on bankruptcy. Also, for married people, Texas is a community property state, if one files - you both have to sign off on the paperwork.
7. **Power Pay Plan.** Extension offers a program that lays out an action plan for you to pay off your debts in a workable plan. Either the lowest balance first, highest balance first, highest interest rate - whatever you need to see and feel that you are making a difference in your debt bottom line. Contact me at [m-ross@tamu.edu](mailto:m-ross@tamu.edu) or 817.884.1294 to learn how.
8. **Avoid payday loans or title loans.** Risking financial items, checking account and car, are not going to be helpful. Borrowing \$300-\$400-\$1000 on a payday loan could result in costs of over 100% interest. Not a wise way to spend money that you need.
9. **Be honest with yourself, your family, your spouse or even a trusted friend.** Stop spending your money on non-essentials. Don't allow others to spend your money (buy you dinner so you feel guilty and buy them dinner); encourage you to have an outlandish, overly expensive birthday party for your two-year old; push you to purchase a more expensive house, car appliances etc. than you can afford. Cut ties with them, if needed, even just for a little while can help you find "lost" money.

Cultivate your financial garden. Consider the plan and work the plan, like anything we all want, it will take time. Taking the time to pay off your debt will be more money in your pocket.



# BITE INTO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Darlene Myatt  
Extension Agent  
Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program

There is no one food, drink, pill or machine that is key to achieving optimal health. A person's overall daily routine is what's most important. That is the reason the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics urges everyone to *Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle* as part of National Nutrition Month® ~ an annual event celebrated in March to reinforce the importance of developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

Using a back-to-the-basics approach, this year's theme encourages Americans to adopt healthy lifestyles focused on consuming fewer calories, making informed food choices and getting daily exercise in order to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, reduce the risk of chronic disease and promote overall health.

Here are some key messages to remember ...

- Improving overall health is not about a specific food or time of year, but requires a lifelong commitment to healthful lifestyle behaviors, emphasizing sustainable and enjoyable eating practices combined with daily physical activity
- A healthy eating plan includes nutrient-rich foods and beverages, vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat milk and dairy products, seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, and nuts or seeds while limiting foods with added fats, sugars and salt.
- Nutrient needs should be met primarily through consuming foods which provide a wide variety of nutrients and other components that are thought to have beneficial effects on health.
- An eating pattern based on the Dietary Guidelines and My Plate recommendations can accommodate the food preferences, cultural traditions and customs of many diverse groups.
- USDA's My Plate can also help you use the Dietary Guidelines to:
  - ▶ Find your balance between food and physical activity to manage your weight;
  - ▶ Reduce food and food components linked to increased health risks;
  - ▶ Increase food and nutrients that promote health while staying within your calorie needs;
  - ▶ Build a healthful eating pattern.





# Quinoa (KEEN-wah)

*Protein with the taste of a whole grain*

Markena Minikon  
County Extension Agent  
Nutrition & Health

Quinoa has come a long way in the last few years. From health stores to the mainstream, its high protein content and delicate texture have made it a popular substitute for starchier pasta and rice.



Cultivated in the Andes for over 5,000 years, quinoa has been called the "mother grain" and "the gold of the Incas." (It's technically not a grain but a seed, but it is used in virtually the same ways as other whole grains.) Today, the popularity of quinoa (**pronounced KEEN-wah**) is growing steadily as people discover its pleasant nutty taste and super-food qualities. As a complete protein source also high in iron, magnesium, and fiber, quinoa is not only one of our healthiest pantry staples, but also one that's incredibly easy and quick to cook.

## Basic Quinoa Facts

### How much cooked quinoa does 1 cup dry quinoa yield?

1 cup dry quinoa yields about 3 cups cooked quinoa.

### How much liquid do I need to cook quinoa?

To cook 1 cup quinoa, you need about 2 cups liquid.

### How long does it take to cook quinoa?

1 cup quinoa will cook in about 20 minutes.

### How do I make quinoa less bitter?

Nearly, if not all, of the natural bitterness of quinoa's outer coating can be removed by a vigorous rinsing in a mesh strainer.

### How do I make better-tasting quinoa?

Quinoa is really excellent when cooked in vegetable or chicken broth. Also, add about 1/4 teaspoon salt to each cup dried quinoa when cooking. Try adding other spices aromatics during cooking as well: A clove of smashed garlic, a sprig of fresh rosemary, a dash of black pepper.

### Can I use my rice cooker to make quinoa?

Yes! Just use the 2:1 liquid to quinoa ratio and follow the instructions on your rice cooker.

## 3-Egg Omelet with Quinoa, Sun-Dried Tomatoes, Spinach, and Goat Cheese

Serves 2



*Note: This recipe is easily doubled or tripled for as many guests as you are serving. The filling can also be made ahead and reheated before preparing the omelets.*

6 large eggs (3 eggs per person)  
1/2 onion, sliced thinly  
1/4 cup sun-dried tomatoes, sliced thinly  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes  
6 ounces (roughly three big handfuls) fresh baby spinach  
1/2 cup [cooked quinoa](#)  
1/4 cup goat cheese  
salt and pepper

Whisk the eggs together in a small bowl and set aside.

Warm a teaspoon of olive oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the onions with a pinch of salt until they turn soft and start to turn golden, about five minutes. Add the sun-dried tomatoes, garlic, and red pepper flakes, and continue stirring until fragrant, 30 seconds. Stir in the spinach a handful at a time. Cook until the spinach is wilted. Taste the filling and add salt and pepper as needed. Transfer the filling to a bowl.

Melt a teaspoon of butter in a 8"-10" nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Whisk the eggs again until they are very frothy. This will help give you soft, fluffy omelets. Pour **half** of the eggs into the pan. When the bottom has set, use a rubber spatula to lift the edges and allow the liquid eggs on top of the omelet to flow underneath. Continue cooking until the top is as set as you like them and the bottom is golden-brown.

Add 1/2 cup of the filling to the side of the omelet opposite the handle. (This makes it easier to transfer the omelet to the serving plate later.) Layer 1/4 cup quinoa on of the filling and dot the top with crumbles of goat cheese.

Fold the omelet onto to the filling and slide the finished omelet onto a dinner plate. Make the second omelet with the remaining eggs and filling. Leftover filling will keep refrigerated for up to a one week. Reheat before making omelets.

Source courtesy of – [www.kitchn.com](http://www.kitchn.com)

# Healthy Cooking Techniques

Tiffany Traylor

Family & Consumer Sciences Extension Agent  
Cooperative Extension Program



Healthy cooking doesn't have to be complicated or expensive try using some basic cooking techniques and methods to reduce the amount of fat and calories in your meals. When using oil to fry your food each tablespoon adds about 100 calories to your meal so consider these cooking methods instead. Below are some of those healthy cooking techniques:

1. **Baking** is described as placing food in a pan or dish that is surrounded by dry and hot air in the oven. Baking does not usually require the use of fat added to the food.
2. **Braising** involves browning the food first in a skillet on the stove and then cooking it slowly covered slightly with a small amount of liquid that is usually water or broth.
3. **Broiling** is the process of placing food on a broiler rack below the heating element. This cooking method exposes the food to direct heat and allows fat to drip away from the food.
4. **Grilling** is very similar to broiling in that they both allow fat to drip away from food and it exposes the food to direct heat. To grill you would place food on a grill rack above charcoal or gas-heated rocks.
5. **Poaching** is gently simmering ingredients in water or flavored liquid (vinegar, broth, wine, milk) at a fairly low temperature. This method of cooking does not require fat to be added during the cooking process.
6. **Roasting** is like baking except the cooking temperatures in roasting is typically higher. Roasting relies on the dry heat of the oven to cook the food. Food is placed on a baking sheet or a roasting pan.
7. **Sautéing** allows food to cook relatively quickly with small pieces of thin food. With the use of a non-stick skillet, fat would not need to be used with this method of cooking.
8. **Stir-Frying** is a traditional method used in Asian cultures. Stir-frying cooks food quickly and evenly when the pieces are uniform in size. The food is stirred in a Wok or large nonstick frying pan with a small amount of oil or cooking spray.





# Timely Garden Tips

Steve Chaney  
County Extension Agent  
Horticulture

## Flowers & Pretty Plants

- Divide fall-blooming perennials and ornamental grasses, if needed to allow time for them to reestablish before blooming.
- Cut back dead foliage of ornamental grasses only after you have seen new green growth emerging from the plant base.
- Plant spring annuals for a blast of new color.
- Fertilize annual and perennial flowers once this month with well finished plant derived compost or 1 pound of bone meal.

## Soil & Mulch

- Lots of planting takes place this month, so do lots of soil preparation too.
- Purchase good organic matter or make your own every time you purchase new plants.
- Don't monkey with the soil too much. If you add a lot of sand and organic matter to clay soil, you may produce the largest adobe brick known to humanity. Stick to adding just well-finished organic matter (e.g., pine bark and compost).
- Please remember there is no need to amend the soil when planting a tree this time of year, back fill with native soil to encourage the root system to branch out instead of girdling.

## Plant Care

- Be prepared for the onslaught of weeds this month. Mulching, pulling, mowing, trimming, and, as a last resort, spraying are viable strategies in the war on weeds.
- Hopefully you finished most of your pruning back in February, if not finish up now.
- Beware of late freezes, even though we have had a mild winter doesn't mean Mother Nature may throw us a late curve. Protect plants if needed using time honored techniques such as hay, straw, leaves, and frost blankets.
- For severely freeze-damaged perennial flowers and shrubs, it may be best to let new growth begin this month and then prune off all dead wood above the fresh new growth.
- Move cold sensitive plants back outdoors until March, but be prepared to move them indoors if a late frost is predicted.

## Lawns

- Mow the warm-season lawn grasses (e.g., St. Augustine and Bermuda) 1 inch lower than the height at which you ended last year. This is not "scalping" the lawn to prevent thatch. This simply removes winter-damaged leaves to clear the way for new spring growth.
- Employ weed-prevention strategies quickly, as weeds will be emerging in March. A properly watered, fertilized and mowed lawn will win the battle against most weeds.
- Irrigate the lawn only if it shows symptoms of stress due to lack of water—footprinting, leaf rolling, off color of gray-green.
- Don't fertilize the lawn yet, even though there are lots of advertisements about it. Responsible spring lawn fertilizing occurs in late April or early May in north central Texas.

## Houseplants

- Move the houseplants (and garaged plants) out to vacation on the deck or patio weather permitting. They have been cooped up all winter and would appreciate a little sun and fresh air.
- Trim and shape them, remove dead or damaged branches and leaves, spray-wash the foliage, water the soil thoroughly, fertilize, eliminate any insects, and let your houseplants grow.

## Butterflies, Birds & Squirrels

- Plant a few plants that provide the essential needs of urban wildlife: food, shelter, and a place to rear their young. In addition to butterflies, birds, and squirrels, urban wildlife for many Texans include deer, rabbits, possums and lots of other animals.
- Don't forget to provide water for the birds with birdbaths, bubblers, and fountains in your yard as well.

**Last but not least, don't forget the sheer joy and enjoyment of gardening in the outdoors and introducing children to it as well!!**



# Locally Grown Strawberries!

Laura M. Miller  
County Extension Agent  
Horticulture



Strawberries are beautiful, delicious and packed with Vitamin C and fiber. As consumers increasingly look to fruits for healthy snacks, the USDA reports that strawberry consumption in the United States increased 60% between 2000 and 2012.

Strawberries have been grown in Texas since the early 1900s, with acreage and production fluctuating through the years. Texas is one of the three southern states, along with berry behemoths California, with 38,000 acres, and Florida, with 9,000 acres that can grow strawberries through the winter for early spring production. While strawberries are big in both dollars and pounds of production in California and Florida, Texas production had dwindled to around 120 acres by 2004. That is less than 0.02 percent of national production. Most of the strawberries we Texans consume come to us from California.

Here in Tarrant County, Gnismar Farms on Bowen Road in Dalworthington Gardens regularly planted about 2 acres of strawberries each year until the Remsings relocated to Riesel, south of Waco in the fall of 2013. There were no strawberries to pick in Tarrant County in 2014, but 2015 will be different.

Thanks to support from the Wal-Mart Foundation administered by the University of Arkansas Center for Agricultural and Rural Sustainability, Dr. Russ Wallace and Extension Specialists and Agents from Texas A&M AgriLife and Prairie View A&M have been working for the past two years to gather resources for strawberry production in Texas and to encourage growers to give strawberries a try on a small scale.

One of those farmers is Craig Turley of Turley's Fruity and Veggie Farm south of Mansfield. The Turley's once operated a Christmas Tree Farm on their semi suburban property and decided to give farming another go last year. They planted four varieties of strawberries, Chandler, Festival, Camarosa, and Camino Real, in September 2014. They plan to sell the results of this great experiment at the Cowtown Farmers Market this spring.

## Thinking about Growing?

Because of the high cost of land and other inputs in urban areas, urban agriculture must produce high value crops. Crops that are both high in value and highly perishable make sense in areas where land values are inflated and resources such as water and labor are limited. Strawberries are valuable and perishable, but anyone thinking about planting next fall should start thinking hard this spring.

A great place to get started is by downloading or ordering the recently published 41 page Production Guide for Texas-Grown Strawberries by visiting the AgriLife Bookstore at <http://www.agrilifebookstore.org/product-p/eh-047.htm>.

Also online, you can like the project's Facebook page and see mouthwatering photos at <https://www.facebook.com/texasstrawberryproject>.

Another great place to get started is by visiting Turley's Fruity and Veggie Farms Strawberry Field Day on April 17, 2015. Craig will be showing and telling us all about his operation and with any luck, we'll be able to taste the four varieties. Lynn Remsing of Gnismar Farms will be coming up to offer his experiences with the berries and to demonstrate equipment that can make strawberry farming faster even when the number of acres farmed can't justify investment in large scale equipment.

If you are interested in making locally grown strawberries as abundant as locally grown tomatoes, please contact Commercial Horticulture Agent Laura Miller at [lmiller@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:lmiller@ag.tamu.edu), for more information about the field day, the production guide and what it takes to get on the berry bandwagon.

R.E.S.P.E.C.T

Shannon Johnson-Lackey  
4-H Extension Agent  
Cooperative Extension Program



Aretha sang about it. Educators throughout our land shout it as a reminder of desired behavior for their students. Parents strive to instill the Golden Rule aspect of it within their households. Our judicial system demands it. Friends and family deserve it for their willingness to lend an ear, a shoulder and non-judgmental attitude when it's needed most. And many earn it simply through their tireless work and service to others. Yet, we may long for it, struggle to understand why some do not embrace it and wish that our leaders practiced it.

As a youth development professional, I'm often challenged to be its voice by being an example. I often find that reciting *"Character counts all the time and all the time character counts"* is a reminder to students to examine their own behavior and make adjustments. When all else fails, I've discovered that getting the hands busy cannot hurt. The following activity sheet on Manners was taken and adapted from *Take A Stand, Curriculum for grades 3-5 which was developed by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service*.

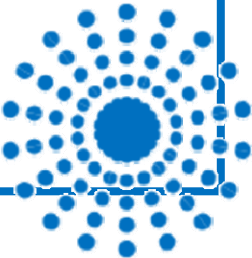
In the Take a Stand curriculum for grades 3-5, each lesson has a Power Phrase. The Power Phrase is something that the students can easily remember and recite to help remind them of the lesson. This particular lesson's Power Phrase is *"Good manners are the perfect way to show respect every day!"* After completing the sheet, I would encourage you to catch them demonstrating these behaviors and complimenting them on their "Respectful" behavior.

Top 10 Manners for Kids

Word Bank

Clean	Compliments	Doors	Elevator	Good
Greet	Names	People	Talking	Thank You

1. Wait your turn while other people are \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Do not call other people \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Always \_\_\_\_\_ someone when they come over to your house or when they speak to you.
4. Say "please" and "\_\_\_\_\_" often to show respect.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ up after yourself.
6. Practice \_\_\_\_\_ sportsmanship when playing with others.
7. Accept \_\_\_\_\_ courteously when they are given to you.
8. Open \_\_\_\_\_ for others.
9. Allow others to get off the \_\_\_\_\_ before you try to enter.
10. Respect the differences of other \_\_\_\_\_.



Conservation - Every little bit helps

Cassius McAlister  
4-H Extension Agent  
Cooperative Extension Program

Conservation is the prevention of the wasteful use of a resource. Here in north Texas a lot of times when we hear conservation we think of water conservation. However, let's not forget energy conservation. Here is a baker's dozen of ways to conserve energy in and around the house.

1. Remember to turn off lights when leaving your home.
2. Remember to unplug chargers used to recharge some of our technology devices such as cell phones, IPads, etc. when leaving the house.
3. Remember to make sure the thermostat is set at 68 in the winter and to 78 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer.
4. Remember to purchase energy efficient bulbs.
5. Remember to turn down the temperature on your refrigerator.
6. Remember if you are replacing appliances, purchase energy efficient models.
7. Remember to clean or replace the filters to your heating-cooling unit once a month.
8. Remember to set your washing machine to a warm or cold setting.
9. Remember to weatherize your home using caulk or weather stripping to seal doors and windows.
10. Remember to wrap your hot water heater in an insulating jacket.
11. Remember to insulate– Installing the appropriate amount of insulation in your home will not only help reduce your cooling and heating costs but will also make your home more comfortable.
12. Remember to seal your ducts – Properly sealing your air conditioning ducts will reduce the amount of cooling and heating required to keep your home comfortable.
13. Plant a tree - the shade helps.

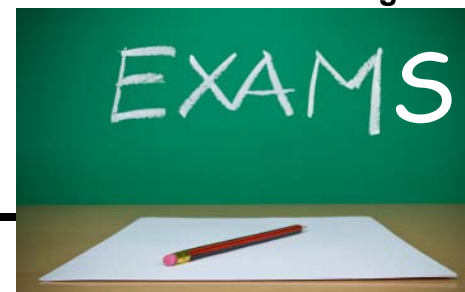
These small tips can save energy and put some change in your pocket.

Source: <http://www.ecomall.com/greenshopping/20things.htm> and <http://www.takealoadoftexas.com/index.aspx?id=energy-efficiency-tips>



# College Entrance

Cindy Bryant  
County Extension Agent 4-H



## Which one is right for you?

During the high school years, students begin to consider possible career and post-secondary opportunities. While exploring various colleges/universities, a student will want to understand the admission requirements. While these vary among institutions, most will require a college admission test.

Frequent questions students ask are, “What is the difference between the SAT & ACT?” and “Which one should I choose?” Registration for each test is individual, so students may choose either or both. Each provider maintains excellent websites with testing information, practice questions, etc.

### SAT

The SAT is a globally recognized college admission test that lets you show colleges what you know and how well you can apply that knowledge. It tests your knowledge of reading, writing and math — subjects that are taught every day in high school classrooms.

The SAT doesn't test logic or abstract reasoning. It tests the skills you're learning in school: reading, writing and math. Your knowledge and skills in these subjects are important for success in college and throughout your life.

- The **critical reading** section includes reading passages and sentence completions.
- The **writing** section includes a short essay and multiple-choice questions on identifying errors and improving grammar and usage.
- The **mathematics** section includes questions on arithmetic operations, algebra, geometry, statistics, and probability.

The best way to prepare for the SAT is to take challenging courses, study hard, and read and write both in and outside the classroom. Students can also take advantage of the [free online practice tools](#), such as an online or printable practice test, sample questions, The Official SAT Question of the Day™ and more.

[www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

### ACT

The ACT tests measure the knowledge and skills that students have acquired throughout their education. The tests emphasize students' capabilities in understanding and interpreting information, solving problems, and applying their knowledge and skills.

The ACT contains five curriculum-based tests: the English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science Tests are standardized multiple choice tests based on the major areas of high school and postsecondary instructional programs; the optional Writing Test is an impromptu essay on a given prompt.

- English – measures standard written English and rhetorical skills
- Math – Measures mathematical skills acquired throughout high school
- Reading – Contains 40 questions measuring reading comprehension
- Science – Measures the interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem-solving skills required in the natural sciences
- Writing – optional – Measures writing skills based on response to a stated prompt

There is no “guessing penalty” on the test. (Correct answers receive a score, but incorrect answers do not result in a penalty.)

ACT maintains a separate record for each test date. Students may submit the scores from a specific test date to the institution of their choice.

[www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

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