



Exemplar Grade 6 English Test Questions



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Introduction

This booklet explains ACT Aspire® Grade 6 English test questions by presenting, with their answer keys, sample questions aligned to each reporting category on the test. A key includes the question's depth-of-knowledge (DOK) level,¹ an explanation of the task posed by each question, a thorough explanation of correct responses, ideas for improvement, and more. The exemplar test questions included here are representative of the range of content and types of questions found on the ACT Aspire Grade 6 English test. Educators can use this resource in several ways:

- Become familiar with ACT Aspire question types.
- See what typical questions in each ACT Aspire reporting category look like.
- Help reinforce or adjust teaching and learning objectives.
- Learn how ACT Aspire improvement idea statements can help students identify key skills they have not yet mastered.

Reporting Categories

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 (multiple-choice) 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 and Usage Conventions

These questions require students to edit text to conform to standard English punctuation and usage.

¹ Norman L. Webb, "Depth-of-Knowledge Levels for Four Content Areas," last modified March 28, 2002, <http://facstaff.wcer.wisc.edu/normw/All%20content%20areas%20%20DOK%20levels%2032802.doc>.

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 and to use various strategies to achieve logical organization, topical unity, and general cohesion.

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 and maintaining consistency in style and tone.

Improvement Ideas

ACT Aspire includes simple improvement ideas at the reporting category (skill) level on student and parent reports. These improvement ideas are provided for the lowest performing skill for each subject tested. The skills are always ordered from highest performing to lowest performing based on the percentage of points correct. If the percentages for two or more skills are tied, the skill with the lower number of total points is displayed first.

Keep in mind that the order of skills listed on reports may not always be exemplary of where to focus learning. For example, the skills in which a student performed within the ACT Readiness Range may not always be listed first, and the skills in which a student did not perform within the ACT Readiness Range may not always be listed last. Also, keep in mind the total number of points possible in each skill when interpreting the percentage correct.

There are two levels of improvement idea statements (low and high) for ACT Aspire summative reporting. Low statements are given on the report if the student's lowest skill score is below the ACT Readiness Range for that particular skill. High statements are given on the report if the student's lowest skill score is at or above the ACT Readiness Range for that particular skill.

Answer Key

This section presents a stimulus text and the sequence number, grade, question type, DOK level, alignment to the ACT Aspire reporting categories, and correct response for each question about the text. Each question is accompanied by an explanation of the question and the correct response as well as improvement idea statements for ACT Aspire English.

Text: “Pie Through the Ages”

Pie Through the Ages

Today, pies filled with sweet, fruity filling are a dessert favorite. But in the time of ancient Greece, people only filled pies with meat, poultry, or seafood. For many centuries, the pie’s pastry shell served primarily as a means for baking, the ¹ tough dough functioned like a pot or casserole dish. The crust also served as a helpful way to carry, store, and serve food. The heavy crust did not go to waste after its filling was gone, however. It was then used to thicken stews.

Many children grow up hearing the nursery rhyme about blackbirds baked in a pie, but few realize there is truth to the tale. In the 1500s, pies were often part of an evening’s entertainment. Blackbirds would be sealed in an uncooked pie that would be presented to partygoers. The birds, which were quite ready to be freed, would fly around once the pie was cut open.

After arriving in North America, English colonists incorporated local ingredients into their pie recipes. They used berries, dried fruit, eggs, and molasses. In the late 1700s, pies were made from apples that were neither peeled nor cored. Some said the crust was so tough that it would not break, even if it were run over by a wagon wheel.

[A] As America expanded westward in the 1800s, settlers hungry for pie had to learn to cope with what tools ² were available, such as possum or vinegar.

[B] As the United States grew, pie continued to be a valuable part of American life. [C] A newspaper editorial in the early 1900s claimed, “Pie is the food of the heroic. No pie-eating people can ever be permanently vanquished.” Pies have been a favorite food for a long time, and today, apple pie is considered a symbol of American life. [D]

Question 1

Pie Through the Ages

time of ancient Greece, people only filled pies with meat, poultry, or seafood. For many centuries, the pie's pastry shell served primarily as a means for **baking, the** tough dough functioned like a pot or casserole dish. The crust also served as a helpful way to carry, store, and serve food. The heavy crust did not go to waste after its filling was gone, however. It was then used to thicken stews.

Many children grow up hearing the nursery rhyme about blackbirds baked in a pie, but few realize there is truth to the tale. In the 1500s, pies were often part of an evening's entertainment. Blackbirds would be sealed in an uncooked pie that would be presented to partygoers. The birds, which were quite ready to be freed, would fly around once the pie was cut open.

After arriving in North America, English colonists incorporated local ingredients into their pie recipes. They used berries, dried fruit, eggs, and molasses. In the late 1700s, pies were made from apples that were neither peeled nor cored. Some said the crust was so tough that it would not break, even if it were run over by a wagon wheel.

[A] As America expanded westward in the 1800s, settlers hungry for pie had to learn to cope with what **tools** were available, such as possum or vinegar.
 [B] As the United States grew, pie continued to be a valuable part of

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

A. NO CHANGE

B. baking. The

C. baking the

D. baking the,

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
1	6	Selected Response	2	Conventions of Standard English	B

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 the Common Core State Standards College and Career Readiness anchor standards [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.

Correct Response

Answer option B corrects the comma splice by separating the two independent clauses into two separate sentences.

Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Conventions of Standard English	6	Work on using parts of speech and punctuation correctly and on identifying essential/nonessential elements. Avoid sentence structure errors, such as inappropriate shifts in tense and pronoun number.	Challenge yourself to write more complex sentences, avoiding errors such as misplaced modifiers. Work on using parts of speech and punctuation (including punctuating essential elements) correctly.

Question 2

Pie Through the Ages

Many children grow up hearing the nursery rhyme about blackbirds baked in a pie, but few realize there is truth to the tale. In the 1500s, pies were often part of an evening's entertainment. Blackbirds would be sealed in an uncooked pie that would be presented to partygoers. The birds, which were quite ready to be freed, would fly around once the pie was cut open.

After arriving in North America, English colonists incorporated local ingredients into their pie recipes. They used berries, dried fruit, eggs, and molasses. In the late 1700s, pies were made from apples that were neither peeled nor cored. Some said the crust was so tough that it would not break, even if it were run over by a wagon wheel.

[A] As America expanded westward in the 1800s, settlers hungry for pie had to learn to cope with what **tools** were available, such as possum or vinegar. [B] As the United States grew, pie continued to be a valuable part of American life. [C] A newspaper editorial in the early 1900s claimed, "Pie is the food of the heroic. No pie-eating people can ever be permanently vanquished." Pies have been a favorite food for a long time, and today, apple pie is considered a symbol of American life. [D]

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

A. NO CHANGE

B. features

C. ingredients

D. portions

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
2	6	Selected Response	3	Knowledge of Language	C

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.

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.

Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Knowledge of Language	6	In your writing, work on choosing words and phrases that are clear and precise and on maintaining consistency in style and tone.	In your writing, work on choosing language that is clear and precise, especially avoiding unnecessary wordiness and redundancy. Also focus on maintaining consistency in style and tone.

Question 3

Pie Through the Ages

Many children grow up hearing the nursery rhyme about blackbirds baked in a pie, but few realize there is truth to the tale. In the 1500s, pies were often part of an evening’s entertainment. Blackbirds would be sealed in an uncooked pie that would be presented to partygoers. The birds, which were quite ready to be freed, would fly around once the pie was cut open.

After arriving in North America, English colonists incorporated local ingredients into their pie recipes. They used berries, dried fruit, eggs, and molasses. In the late 1700s, pies were made from apples that were neither peeled nor cored. Some said the crust was so tough that it would not break, even if it were run over by a wagon wheel.

[A] As America expanded westward in the 1800s, settlers hungry for pie had to learn to cope with what tools were available, such as possum or vinegar.
 [B] As the United States grew, pie continued to be a valuable part of American life. [C] A newspaper editorial in the early 1900s claimed, “Pie is the food of the heroic. No pie-eating people can ever be permanently vanquished.” Pies have been a favorite food for a long time, and today, apple pie is considered a symbol of American life. [D]

Where would be the best place to add the following sentence?
 Pie was quite important to these settlers, and they ate it with almost every meal.

A. Point A
 B. Point B
 C. Point C
 D. Point D

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
3	6	Selected Response	3	Production of Writing	B

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.

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.

Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Production of Writing	6	In your writing, work on developing your topic effectively, organizing your ideas logically, and expressing your ideas in a clear and consistent way.	Practice writing for a variety of purposes. Continue working on organizing ideas in logical, cohesive ways and on expressing ideas in a precise, concise, and stylistically consistent manner.