



STUDENT PRACTICE BOOKLET

Test Ninjas ACT Reading Practice Exam

READING • INDIVIDUAL ACT SECTION

36

QUESTIONS

1

SECTION

STUDENT NAME _____

DATE _____

INSTRUCTOR _____

PLAN YOUR SESSION

- Choose whether you will use the suggested section times or work without a timer.
- Keep your responses in the section you are currently completing.
- Record one answer per item and make any corrections unambiguous.
- Set the answer materials aside until your practice session is finished.

BOOKLET INFORMATION

SUGGESTED TIMING
40 minutes

USEFUL MATERIALS
Writing tool • scratch paper

RESULTS
Unofficial practice feedback

SESSION CUE

Begin when your instructor or personal timer is ready.

PUBLICATION NOTE

This booklet is an independently written practice resource. It is not an ACT test form, and results from it are not official scores.

STUDENT INITIALS _____

PRACTICE ASSESSMENT · 2026 EDITION

Published by Test Ninjas

Test Ninjas develops independently written study materials for structured practice, review, and classroom use.

DOCUMENT**Test Ninjas ACT Reading Practice Exam****PUBLISHER****Test Ninjas · test-ninjas.com****EDITION IDENTIFIER****TEST NINJAS · READING-10 · 2026.07**

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READING TEST

40 MINUTES—36 QUESTIONS

DIRECTIONS: Build each answer from the passage itself. Numbering in the margin marks every fifth body line, and an item may point to a specific line or range. Revisit that evidence before selecting a response.

Record one response for each item; if more than one choice seems plausible, select the one best supported by the material provided.

LITERARY NARRATIVE: This original fictional passage follows a young inventor developing an edible water container.

Lila's fingers trembled slightly as she held the translucent sphere up to the afternoon light streaming through her grandmother's kitchen window. The orb caught the sun like a soap bubble, but instead of iridescent swirls, it glowed with the deep amber of honey. Inside, water sloshed gently, contained by walls that smelled faintly of the ocean.

"You made this?" Her grandmother, Nana Rose, set down her teacup with a deliberate clink that Lila recognized as skepticism wrapped in politeness.

"It's seaweed," Lila said, rotating the sphere to show how the light passed through its walls. "Well, technically it's a biopolymer extracted from red algae. But yes, I made it." She punctured the sphere with her thumbnail, and water poured into her palm. Then, without hesitation, she bit into the container itself. It tasted like salted caramel with a hint of umami—an unexpected combination that somehow worked.

Nana Rose's eyebrows climbed toward her silver hairline. In all her seventy-three years, she'd seen plenty of her granddaughter's inventions: the solar-powered homework scanner, the self-stirring soup pot, the infamous glitter-bomb alarm clock that had taken weeks to fully clean up. But this was different. This had potential beyond their small coastal town.

"Show me," Nana Rose said, pushing her teacup aside.

Lila's workshop occupied what used to be the garage, a space her parents had surrendered after the Incident of the Expanding Foam. Every surface bore the evidence of her experiments: beakers filled with various stages of algae cultivation, charts tracking polymer strength at different temperatures, and a small mountain of failed prototypes that looked like deflated jellyfish. The successful ones hung from a clothesline strung across the room, each tinted a different shade depending on the type of seaweed used.

"The beauty is in the simplicity," Lila explained, ladling a portion of the algae mixture into a spherical mold. "Heat it to exactly 62 degrees Celsius, add the natural binding proteins I isolated from kelp, and it forms these perfect membranes. They're strong enough to hold a liter of water but break down completely in compost within two weeks."

"And if someone doesn't compost them?"

"Then they can eat them. That's the whole point—everything about this is designed to leave no trace. The bottles that don't get eaten become nutrients for soil or sea. Even the dyes are from vegetable extracts. I calculated that if just our town switched to these for the summer tourist season, we'd prevent approximately 2.3 million plastic bottles from entering the ecosystem."

Nana Rose picked up one of the finished spheres, testing its weight and flexibility. She had spent her career as a marine biologist before retiring, had seen firsthand what plastic did to the creatures she studied. "The water inside—how long does it stay fresh?"

"Three weeks at room temperature, longer if refrigerated. The algae has natural antimicrobial properties." Lila tried to keep her voice steady, but excitement crept in. "I've been thinking about flavoring the containers themselves. Imagine buying water in a bottle that tastes like strawberry or mint when you're done drinking."

"Have you shown this to anyone else?"

Lila shook her head. "I wanted you to see it first. You're the one who taught me that the ocean provides everything we need if we just learn to ask properly."

Her grandmother smiled then, the kind of smile that crinkled her eyes and made her look decades younger. "I said that about fishing, dear one. You've taken it to another level entirely." She held the water bottle up to the window, where it caught the light like captured sunshine. "This could change everything."

"Or it could be another garage explosion waiting to happen," Lila said, but she was grinning too.

"No," Nana Rose said firmly. "This is different. This is your gift to the world." She paused, then added with a mischievous glint, "Though perhaps we should test it somewhere other than my kitchen when you scale up production."

They laughed together, the sound mixing with the gentle bubble of the algae tanks and the distant cry of seagulls. Outside, the ocean that had inspired Lila's invention continued its eternal rhythm, unaware that in this converted garage, a seventeen-year-old girl had found a way to protect it using its own gifts.

Over the following weeks, word spread through their community like morning fog. The local surfing club became Lila's first customers, drawn by bottles they could eat after a session rather than carrying back to shore. The town's environmental group ordered a thousand units for their beach cleanup event. Even the skeptical fishermen, including Lila's own father, admitted the bottles were "not bad" when they discovered the savory umami flavor complemented their lunch sandwiches.

But it was the email from the Marine Conservation Institute that changed everything. They'd heard about her invention through Nana Rose's old colleague network and wanted to discuss large-scale implementation. Suddenly, Lila's garage experiment had the attention of people who could transform it from a local curiosity to a global solution.

The night before the video conference with the Institute, Lila sat in her workshop surrounded by her bubble-like creations. Each one represented hours of failure and discovery, of burns from hot polymer and stained fingers from vegetable dyes. Nana Rose found her there, holding one of the first successful prototypes—imperfect and slightly lopsided, but revolutionary nonetheless.

"Scared?" her grandmother asked.

"Terrified," Lila admitted. "What if they think it's silly? What if it doesn't work at scale? What if—"

"What if you've created something that helps heal the ocean?"

Nana Rose interrupted gently. "Fear is just another experiment, dear one. The only way to know the results is to try."

CONTINUE →

1. The main purpose of the passage is to:
 - A. chronicle the scientific process behind a young inventor's failed experiments.
 - B. describe the challenges of running a business from a garage.
 - C. explain why seaweed makes an ideal material for water bottles.
 - D. illustrate how a teenager's innovation addresses environmental concerns.
2. Nana Rose's initial reaction to Lila's invention can best be described as:
 - F. enthusiastic support masked by feigned indifference.
 - G. immediate recognition of its commercial potential.
 - H. complete dismissal based on past failures.
 - J. polite skepticism followed by genuine interest.
3. The description of Lila's workshop in the paragraph in lines 24–32 primarily serves to:
 - A. illustrate the systematic approach behind Lila's innovation.
 - B. emphasize the chaotic nature of teenage inventions.
 - C. explain why her parents banished her to the garage.
 - D. contrast her current success with previous failures.
4. According to the passage, what makes Lila's water bottles different from traditional plastic bottles?
 - F. They are less expensive to produce than plastic bottles.
 - G. They keep water fresh longer than conventional containers.
 - H. They can be consumed after use or biodegrade completely.
 - J. They are easier to manufacture in large quantities.
5. The passage suggests that Lila's relationship with her grandmother is characterized by:
 - A. professional collaboration based solely on scientific interest.
 - B. mutual respect combined with shared environmental values.
 - C. tension due to generational differences in approaching problems.
 - D. a teacher-student dynamic where Nana Rose provides instruction.
6. The statement in lines 40–44 about leaving 'no trace' primarily emphasizes:
 - F. the bottles' intended ability to be eaten or break down without leaving persistent waste.
 - G. the difficulty of tracking the bottles after disposal.
 - H. the invisible nature of the manufacturing process.
 - J. the bottles' transparency when holding water.
7. Based on the passage, the 'Incident of the Expanding Foam' most likely refers to:
 - A. a successful experiment that required more space.
 - B. a previous invention that went wrong in the house.
 - C. the discovery that led to the seaweed bottles.
 - D. a community protest against Lila's experiments.
8. The image of the ocean's 'eternal rhythm' in the sentence in lines 72–76 serves to:
 - F. contrast nature's permanence with human innovation's temporary impact.
 - G. suggest the ocean's indifference will prevent the invention's success.
 - H. emphasize the reciprocal relationship between the ocean as inspiration and as the invention's intended beneficiary.
 - J. illustrate why Lila chose seaweed over other biodegradable materials.
9. By the end of the passage, Lila's fear about the video conference reveals her:
 - A. lack of confidence in the scientific merit of her invention.
 - B. concern about transitioning from local success to broader impact.
 - C. worry that Nana Rose has overestimated the invention's potential.
 - D. regret about involving the Marine Conservation Institute too soon.

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This original passage examines strengths-based education through research findings and an illustrative school case.

For generations, schools have often begun support plans by identifying what students do not yet know and then targeting those gaps. Strengths-based education does not reject remediation, but it begins with a different question: Which abilities and interests can a student use as a starting point for further growth?

Advocates argue that this shift can change how students approach difficult work. A learner who experiences genuine competence in one area may be more willing to attempt a less familiar task. Researchers must still separate that possibility from other influences, such as teacher expectations, additional planning time, or changes in classroom climate.

Reports from several small pilot programs describe students participating more actively and attempting difficult work more readily when lessons gave them meaningful ways to use existing abilities. In some classrooms, students also improved in weaker areas even though those areas remained challenging.

One proposed explanation is "success momentum." A credible success can strengthen a student's sense of agency; that confidence may make the student more willing to persist, seek feedback, and recover from mistakes. The idea does not imply that confidence substitutes for instruction. It suggests that confidence can affect whether students use the instruction available to them.

Consider an illustrative middle school that had low assessment scores, frequent disciplinary referrals, and high teacher turnover. Instead of eliminating remedial lessons, the school asked teachers to identify students' demonstrated strengths—such as creativity, perseverance, careful analysis, or skill in explaining ideas—and to build multiple routes into the same academic goals.

A history assignment, for example, might permit one student to write historical fiction, another to construct a cause-and-effect timeline, and another to conduct an oral-history interview. Each student would still need to use accurate evidence and meet shared criteria. The routes would differ, but the academic standard would not.

Teachers in the illustrative school initially struggled with the additional planning, and some families worried that emphasizing strengths would allow students to avoid essential skills. By the end of the first year, however, the school's example showed fewer disciplinary referrals, stronger teacher-reported engagement, and modest gains on common assessments.

The example cannot by itself prove that the new approach caused every improvement. A stronger evaluation would compare similar groups, track implementation, and examine whether changes persist. Its purpose is to show how a strengths-based program might operate and why several outcomes could move together.

Research on positive emotion offers one possible mechanism. In laboratory studies, positive affect can broaden attention and support flexible thinking. Repeated successful experiences may also help people build coping resources. These findings do not show that using a strength automatically activates a unique brain state or guarantees higher achievement.

Critics raise practical and educational concerns. Schools may lack time to redesign lessons, strengths assessments may oversimplify students, and labels can become limiting. Most importantly, a strengths-based approach could fail if it becomes an excuse to avoid sustained effort outside a student's comfort zone.

A response to that concern is sometimes called "strengths-stretching": students use an area of competence to approach increasingly difficult work. A student skilled at leading small discussions might next mediate a disagreement, present a contested issue to a larger audience, and eventually organize a community project requiring unfamiliar planning skills.

Evidence about long-term effects remains limited. Researchers would need to follow students for years to determine whether such programs produce durable changes in resilience, relationships, or job satisfaction. Short-term engagement and assessment gains cannot establish those adult outcomes.

The question is therefore not whether schools should teach strengths instead of fundamentals. It is whether existing competencies can help students master fundamentals and then move beyond them. The most defensible programs combine high expectations, direct instruction, multiple ways to engage with material, and careful evaluation.

This balance may matter as technology changes the tasks people perform. Specific tools can become obsolete, while capacities such as learning from feedback, explaining ideas, collaborating, and solving unfamiliar problems remain useful. A strengths-based approach is promising only if it helps students extend those capacities rather than treating current preferences as permanent limits.

- 10.** The passage primarily argues that positive psychology in education:
- F.** works by building on student strengths rather than focusing on deficits.
 - G.** should completely replace traditional remedial approaches.
 - H.** is only effective in well-funded school districts.
 - J.** requires students to avoid challenging academic subjects.
- 11.** Refer to lines 13–18. Which explanation does the passage propose for why some students in strengths-based classrooms may improve in areas that remain difficult?
- A.** teachers secretly provided remedial instruction.
 - B.** the curriculum eliminated challenging material.
 - C.** Success momentum may make students more willing to persist through difficulties.
 - D.** standardized tests became easier over time.
- 12.** The illustrative middle-school example serves primarily to:
- F.** demonstrate how a strengths-based approach could operate in a struggling school.
 - G.** prove that assessment scores are the only meaningful educational outcome.
 - H.** show that strengths-based education can work only with middle-school students.
 - J.** argue that remedial instruction should be eliminated entirely.
- 13.** Research on positive emotion discussed in the passage indicates that positive affect can:
- A.** eliminate the need for direct academic instruction.
 - B.** guarantee higher achievement for every student.
 - C.** produce a unique brain state used only during strengths-based work.
 - D.** broaden attention and support flexible thinking.
- 14.** Refer to lines 39–45. The highlighted results from the illustrative school's first year are presented to show:
- F.** why standardized testing should be eliminated from schools.
 - G.** that disciplinary issues were more important than academic achievement.
 - H.** how teachers manipulated data to support the new program.
 - J.** that positive results emerged despite initial implementation challenges.
- 15.** A principal concern about strengths-based education, as presented in the passage, is that it might:
- A.** cost too much for most schools to implement effectively.
 - B.** lead students to avoid challenges outside their comfort zones.
 - C.** create unfair advantages for naturally talented students.
 - D.** conflict with traditional grading systems.
- 16.** The passage identifies which claim as requiring stronger long-term evidence?
- F.** Teachers need time to redesign lessons.
 - G.** Students can enter the same assignment through different activities.
 - H.** Strengths-based programs produce lasting improvements in adult resilience and job satisfaction.
 - J.** Positive first-year results cannot by themselves prove causation.
- 17.** The concept of 'strengths-stretching' described in the paragraph in lines 65–70 refers to:
- A.** physical exercises designed to improve student flexibility.
 - B.** using areas of competence to tackle increasingly difficult challenges.
 - C.** extending the school day to allow more strengths development.
 - D.** combining multiple student strengths into group projects.
- 18.** According to the passage, why may a strengths-based approach matter as technology changes the tasks people perform?
- F.** computers can now identify human strengths better than teachers.
 - G.** Specific tools can become obsolete while adaptable human capacities remain useful.
 - H.** technology eliminates the need for traditional academic subjects.
 - J.** artificial intelligence will replace humans without strong digital skills.

HUMANITIES: These original paired passages examine how shared meals can shape community.

Passage A

Food, anthropologists have long argued, is never only about sustenance. A shared meal can communicate hospitality, identity, memory, and belonging. Studies of urban communities therefore examine meals as one setting in which people from different groups may form relationships.

The connection can operate on multiple levels. Offering food may signal hospitality and cooperation, although a meal does not automatically create trust. Stories accompanying a dish can deepen the exchange. When someone shares a family recipe, the person may also be sharing history, values, and ideas about comfort or celebration.

Consider an illustrative account of a neighborhood called Riverside. Residents from several cultural communities lived near one another but rarely interacted. Organizers arranged a series of progressive dinners in which participants moved from home to home, sampled dishes, and heard the stories behind them. The example shows one plausible route from repeated contact to stronger neighborhood ties.

What began as a tentative experiment by a few neighbors evolved into a neighborhood institution. The Korean grandmother teaching the Ethiopian teenager to fold dumplings; the Polish baker adapting his pierogi recipe to be halal; the Caribbean family learning to appreciate injera not just as food but as an edible plate that brings people literally to the same table—these micro-interactions accumulated into macro-change.

The anthropological significance extends beyond mere cultural exchange. Food-based community building creates what I term "gustatory empathy"—the ability to understand another's experience through taste. When you know the effort required to prepare someone's traditional dish, when you understand why certain spices evoke homeland memories, when you see how recipes carry trauma and triumph across generations, stereotypes become harder to maintain.

This isn't to romanticize the process. Food can also reinforce boundaries, mark exclusion, and maintain hierarchies. The question of who gets to cook "authentic" cuisine, which establishments are welcomed in gentrifying neighborhoods, how fusion is perceived versus appropriation—these tensions are real and significant. But even these conflicts, when addressed openly, can lead to deeper understanding.

Social-science research suggests that repeated, cooperative interaction can increase familiarity and trust, but eating together does not erase conflict or guarantee friendship. A meal can involve vulnerability: participants trust that the food is safe, that their manner of eating will not be mocked, and that their preferences will be respected. When that trust is honored, a shared meal can strengthen a relationship.

My research suggests that food-centered community building succeeds where other interventions fail because it operates below the level of ideology. Political beliefs, religious differences, and social prejudices that might prevent other forms of interaction become secondary to the immediate, sensory experience of sharing a meal. The tongue doesn't ask about documentation status; the stomach doesn't care about political affiliation.

Passage B

The email arrived on a Tuesday: "Your refugee application has been approved. Welcome to Canada." Six months later, I stood in a Montreal kitchen that wasn't mine, cooking biryani for strangers who would become family, though I didn't know it yet.

I had been many things in my life—a teacher in Damascus, a mother, a temporary resident in three countries—but I had never been a restaurant owner. The idea came not from ambition but from homesickness so acute it manifested as physical pain. I needed to cook the foods of my childhood, needed to smell coriander and cardamom, needed to hear the sizzle of onions in ghee. If I was going to cook anyway, why not share?

"Fatima's Table" began as a weekend pop-up in a church basement. Twenty seats, one menu, whatever I felt like cooking that week. The health inspector who came to certify our kitchen stayed for dinner. The banker who helped with our business plan brought his mother the following week. The city councilor who initially opposed our permit became our most vocal supporter after trying my muhammara.

But the real magic wasn't in converting skeptics—it was in the conversations that happened over plates of kibbeh and bowls of lentil soup. The Syrian civil engineer meeting the Quebecois contractor who needed someone with exactly his skills. The elderly woman who hadn't spoken Arabic in forty years, tears streaming down her face as she tasted maqluba like her mother used to make. The teenager from the local high school who started volunteering as a server and discovered her calling in hospitality.

Food became our common language in a city where I initially spoke neither French nor English fluently. But everyone understood the universal gesture of offering a plate, the smile that accompanies a perfectly seasoned dish, the satisfaction of seeing someone close their eyes on the first bite, transported.

We grew from that church basement to a proper restaurant space in eighteen months. The crowd-funding campaign exceeded its goal in three days. Local suppliers began stocking ingredients I'd previously had to source from Toronto. A cookbook followed, then a second location, then inquiries from other cities asking how to replicate our model.

But success, I learned, comes with its own challenges. How do you maintain authenticity while adapting to local tastes? How do you honor your culinary traditions while embracing innovation? When the food critic wrote that my fattoush was "almost as good as what you'd find in Damascus," I spent the night wondering whether "almost" was an insult or simply honest.

The answer came from my customers—not the critics or the food bloggers, but the regular people who made Fatima's Table part of their routine. The construction worker who came every Friday for kafta. The law student who wrote her thesis at our corner table, fueled by Turkish coffee and ma'amoul. The mixed Syrian-Canadian couple who held their wedding reception in our space, serving both tourtière and kibbeh nayeh.

I realized then that authenticity isn't about perfect replication—it's about honest intention. My biryani might taste different made with Quebec lamb instead of Syrian meat, but the love in its preparation remains constant. The sumac I sprinkle on the hummus might come from a different soil, but it carries the same memory of my grandmother's hands teaching mine the proper proportion.

Three years after opening, we hosted a dinner for new Syrian arrivals. As I watched them eat—some crying, some laughing, all remembering—I understood that I hadn't just built a restaurant. I had created what anthropologists might call a "liminal space," existing between homeland and new land, where identity could be both preserved and transformed.

The teenage volunteer from our early days is now our sous chef, bringing her own Haitian family recipes into our kitchen. The walls display art from local immigrant artists. Our menu includes a "Montreal Mezze" that would horrify purists but delights adventurous eaters. We've become not just a Syrian restaurant but a place where cultures meet, clash, blend, and ultimately, nourish each other.

When people ask for my secret ingredient, I tell them the truth: it's not sumac or seven-spice or even love, though all those matter. It's the willingness to feed others as you would feed family, to believe that a full stomach and an open table can begin to heal the fractures in our communities. In the end, we're all hungry for the same thing—not just food, but belonging.

CONTINUE →

19. The main purpose of Passage A is to:
- A. present an anthropological analysis of how food creates community bonds.
 - B. argue against the commercialization of ethnic cuisines.
 - C. describe the nutritional benefits of diverse dietary practices.
 - D. critique progressive dinner events as superficial cultural exchanges.
20. Passage B differs from Passage A primarily in its:
- F. rejection of food as a meaningful cultural bridge.
 - G. argument that restaurants should avoid fusion cooking.
 - H. emphasis on maintaining cultural purity in cuisine.
 - J. focus on personal narrative rather than academic analysis.
21. The description in lines 12–18 of Riverside neighborhood's transformation in Passage A serves to:
- A. provide a concrete illustration of food-based community building.
 - B. demonstrate why one Canadian city is superior to other multicultural cities.
 - C. argue that ethnic separation is inevitable without formal intervention.
 - D. show that a government program successfully integrated the neighborhood.
22. Both passages suggest that sharing food is particularly effective at building community because:
- F. it requires significant financial investment from participants.
 - G. it eliminates the need for verbal communication between groups.
 - H. it allows people to maintain cultural boundaries while seeming friendly.
 - J. it operates through sensory and emotional channels rather than ideological ones.
23. The concept of 'gustatory empathy' in Passage A most closely aligns with which idea from Passage B?
- A. The financial success of Fatima's crowdfunding campaign.
 - B. The ability to understand others' experiences through sharing their food.
 - C. The importance of maintaining exact traditional recipes.
 - D. The challenge of obtaining proper ingredients in a new country.
24. The statement in lines 48–54 in Passage A about food operating 'below the level of ideology' suggests that:
- F. people must abandon their beliefs to share meals together.
 - G. food removes intellectual capacity during consumption.
 - H. shared sensory experiences can connect people despite philosophical differences.
 - J. ideological discussions should be banned during meals.
25. Fatima's reflection on the food critic's comment about her fat-toush reveals her concern about:
- A. whether she should change her recipes to please critics.
 - B. the tension between authenticity and adaptation in immigrant cuisine.
 - C. her lack of formal culinary training compared to other chefs.
 - D. the financial impact of negative restaurant reviews.
26. Which statement best captures how both authors view the potential challenges of food-based community building?
- F. Both dismiss challenges as insignificant compared to benefits.
 - G. Both acknowledge complexities while maintaining optimism about food's connective power.
 - H. Passage A ignores challenges while Passage B focuses on them.
 - J. Both argue challenges make food-based integration impossible.
27. The paragraph in lines 74–80 in Passage B about connections made at Fatima's restaurant illustrates:
- A. how restaurants should focus on networking events rather than food quality.
 - B. why immigrant restaurants typically fail within the first year.
 - C. how food spaces can facilitate both practical and emotional connections.
 - D. that only people from similar backgrounds patronize ethnic restaurants.

NATURAL SCIENCE: This original passage discusses published research on structural parallels between birdsong and human song.

When a dawn chorus begins, listeners may hear patterns that resemble features of human music. Researchers can compare those patterns quantitatively, but they must distinguish a measurable similarity from a claim that birds experience music as humans do. The strongest studies therefore make limited claims about pitch, rhythm, learning, or motor control.

One such study began with recordings of the hermit thrush, a North American songbird. Composer and researcher Emily Doolittle and her colleagues measured the stable pitches in many songs and tested mathematical models of the relationships among those pitches. Their analysis did not ask whether the birds preferred Bach or understood harmony. It asked whether the frequencies followed a repeatable numerical pattern.

Many human scales are built partly from intervals whose frequencies form small-integer ratios, such as 2:1 or 3:2. Doolittle's team found that most hermit-thrush songs in its sample favored ratios derived from the harmonic, or overtone, series. The result showed a specific mathematical convergence between this bird's pitch selection and principles used in many human scales; it did not show that every culture or bird species uses one universal scale.

The hermit thrush was especially informative because the researchers also tested a simpler explanation: perhaps the bird's vocal anatomy could produce only those pitches. Their models indicated instead that the pattern resulted from active pitch selection in the nervous system rather than from a fixed mechanical limit. The authors also emphasized that there was no evidence that the songs of most bird species follow the overtone series.

Pitch ratios are only one possible point of comparison. In another study, Adam Tierney, Frank Russo, and Aniruddh Patel compared large samples of human and avian song. They examined melodic contours, the duration of phrase-final notes, and the size of pitch movements. Some shared tendencies were consistent with efficient motor actions, while differences matched the distinct ways birds and humans produce sound.

The researchers' motor-constraint hypothesis proposes that similar production demands can favor similar song structures in distantly related species. A long final note, for example, may occur because slowing a vocal gesture at a phrase boundary is mechanically efficient. Under this account, a shared pattern need not come from imitation, a common musical taste, or inheritance from a recent common ancestor.

Studies of vocal learning provide a separate kind of parallel. Songbirds and humans have specialized, motor-related forebrain pathways used in learning and producing complex vocalizations. The structures are not identical, and birdsong is not human language, but experiments involving development, brain activity, and lesions have identified comparable learning and production functions.

Young songbirds also learn by listening and practice. Depending on the species, learning may be concentrated in an early sensitive period or may continue into adulthood. Geographic groups can develop local song variants. These observations make songbirds useful models for studying how auditory feedback shapes a learned vocal behavior.

Other experiments test auditory categorization rather than song production. In a controlled study, pigeons learned to make different responses to music by Bach and Stravinsky. When researchers played unfamiliar selections, the birds generalized the trained distinction to some other composers, although their classifications did not always match those a human listener might make. The result demonstrates learned discrimination of complex sound patterns, not an artistic judgment.

Taken together, the studies illustrate convergent solutions: under some shared mathematical or motor constraints, separate species can produce comparable patterns. The comparisons are informative precisely because they have limits. A ratio found in one songbird species cannot be generalized to all birds, and a successful discrimination task does not prove that pigeons hear musical style exactly as people do.

This caution does not make the similarities trivial. It makes them testable. Researchers can ask which acoustic features recur, which mechanisms produce them, and which species learn them. Each question can be answered with recordings, behavioral experiments, and explicit models instead of relying on a metaphor that simply labels birdsong as music.

The emerging picture is therefore neither that music is uniquely human nor that every bird is a humanlike musician. It is that vocal behavior offers carefully bounded comparisons across species. Those comparisons can reveal how nervous systems, bodies, learning, and acoustics combine to produce structured sound.

28. The main purpose of the passage is to:
- F. explain what carefully limited comparisons between birdsong and human song can reveal.
 - G. argue that birds experience music in exactly the same way humans do.
 - H. show that every bird species uses the harmonic series in its songs.
 - J. promote birdsong recordings as a replacement for laboratory research.
29. Doolittle and her colleagues' analysis was significant because it:
- A. found that most hermit-thrush songs in the sample favored simple frequency ratios also used in many human scales.
 - B. proved that hermit thrushes consciously apply human music theory.
 - C. showed that all bird species use the same scale.
 - D. demonstrated that hermit-thrush pitch is fixed entirely by vocal anatomy.
30. According to the passage, the hermit thrush was particularly informative because researchers found that it:
- F. could imitate any human musical instrument.
 - G. had a larger repertoire than every other songbird.
 - H. actively selected overtone-related pitches rather than being mechanically limited to them.
 - J. was the first animal ever studied for vocal learning.
31. The motor-constraint study suggests that some similarities between human and avian song occur because:
- A. birds learned their melodic contours from human singers.
 - B. both groups possess identical vocal organs.
 - C. similar production demands can favor efficient structural patterns in both groups.
 - D. all pitch movements are equally easy for every species to produce.
32. The paragraph in lines 16–23 about frequency ratios serves primarily to:
- F. claim that humans invented harmonic ratios before they appeared in birdsong.
 - G. show that only trained musicians can hear small-integer ratios.
 - H. argue that one scale is universal across all cultures and species.
 - J. define the measured pattern shared by many human scales and the sampled hermit-thrush songs.
33. Research on vocal-learning pathways discussed in the passage indicates that:
- A. bird and human brains contain identical structures in identical locations.
 - B. hearing birdsong automatically activates every human language area.
 - C. only professionally trained singers use motor-related forebrain pathways.
 - D. vocal-learning birds and humans use comparable specialized pathways for learning and producing vocalizations.
34. Refer to lines 40–47. The highlighted motor-constraint hypothesis suggests that:
- F. human songs must have been copied from ancient birdsongs.
 - G. a recent common ancestor taught both groups the same melodies.
 - H. shared patterns prove that birds and humans have identical musical tastes.
 - J. similar production constraints can independently favor similar song structures.
35. The experiment in which pigeons distinguished music by Bach and Stravinsky demonstrates that pigeons can:
- A. rank composers according to artistic quality.
 - B. recognize every musical genre without training.
 - C. learn and sometimes generalize a discrimination between complex sound patterns.
 - D. compose new selections in the style of either composer.
36. Refer to lines 70–76. The highlighted discussion of convergent solutions emphasizes that:
- F. any similarity between two species proves identical experience.
 - G. shared constraints can produce comparable patterns, but each comparison must be kept within the evidence.
 - H. findings from one songbird species apply automatically to every bird.
 - J. auditory discrimination and song production are the same ability.

SECTION COMPLETE · 3

Pause here and wait for the cue to begin the next section.
During timed practice, do not revisit a section after leaving it.



QUICK REFERENCE

Answer Key

Correct responses by section

READING · READING SECTION

1 D	2 J	3 A	4 H	5 B	6 F	7 B	8 H	9 B
10 F	11 C	12 F	13 D	14 J	15 B	16 H	17 B	18 G
19 A	20 J	21 A	22 J	23 B	24 H	25 B	26 G	27 C
28 F	29 A	30 H	31 C	32 J	33 D	34 J	35 C	36 G

TEST NINJAS ACT PRACTICE

Reading: Number Correct to Scale Score

Find your total number correct in this 36-question Test Ninjas section, then read across to the estimated 1–36 scale score. Wrong answers do not subtract points.

Reading Practice Conversion

36 questions · 27 operational-question curve

NUMBER CORRECT OF 36	ESTIMATED SCALE SCORE	NUMBER CORRECT OF 36	ESTIMATED SCALE SCORE
36	36	17	17
35	35	16	16
34	35	15	15
33	34	14	15
32	32	13	14
31	30	12	13
30	30	11	12
29	28	10	12
28	26	9	12
27	25	8	11
26	25	7	10
25	24	6	10
24	23	5	9
23	22	4	7
22	22	3	5
21	21	2	5
20	20	1	3
19	18	0	1
18	18		

How this estimate is calculated: ACT’s enhanced Reading practice curve scores 27 operational questions, while this booklet presents 36 questions and does not identify field-test items. Each total correct is therefore projected proportionally to 27 scored questions, rounded to the nearest raw point, and converted with ACT’s published practice curve. The result is useful for practice planning but is not an official ACT score.



TEST NINJAS PRACTICE ASSESSMENT

End of Practice Assessment

Your practice booklet is complete. Check your work only after the timing conditions you selected have ended.

Test Ninjas ACT Reading Practice Exam

TEST NINJAS · READING-10 · 2026.07

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