

Some Basic Information

What is WorkKeys?

The WorkKeys system from ACT is designed to help you develop better workplace skills. Better skills mean better-paying jobs—in any career field.

The WorkKeys system consists of job analysis (finding out which skills are needed on the job), assessments (the tests you'll be taking plus several others), reporting (telling you how your skills match job requirements), and instructional support (guidance to educators related to improving students' skill levels).

Why is WorkKeys important?

In many places throughout the United States, employers find that students are not adequately trained even for entry level jobs. WorkKeys helps businesses and educators work together to ensure that you leave school prepared for real jobs in the real world.

What types of skills are needed?

WorkKeys measures skills that employers believe are critical to job success—skills such as reading, math, listening, locating information, and teamwork. These skills are valuable for any type of occupation—skilled or professional—and at any level of education.

How does the system work?

WorkKeys helps you figure out how prepared you are for jobs that interest you and guides you to the education and training you need. The system documents your work skills in key areas, giving you an edge with employers when you apply for jobs.

Isn't it easy to find a job in today's economy?

There are plenty of jobs available, but employers are having a great deal of trouble finding workers with adequate skills. With the right training and experience, people can move from low-skill, low-pay jobs to high-skill, high-pay jobs.

So are these tests designed for only low-level, blue-collar jobs?

Not at all. WorkKeys has analyzed the job skills needed for almost 5000 unique job titles, ranging from accountant to automotive technician and from welder to webmaster. In fact, the fastest growing types of WorkKeys job profiles are being done for professional, technical, and managerial jobs that require at least a bachelor's degree. The abilities to learn, listen, communicate, work in teams, and solve problems—all areas addressed by WorkKeys—are important assets for any employee, regardless of career choice.

Do higher skills mean higher salaries?

Studies show that jobs requiring higher skills in math, locating information, and reading pay higher entry-level salaries. By increasing your skills while you are still in school, you increase your opportunities for higher salaries both now and in the future.

Why should I care about these tests?

Since WorkKeys tests aren't the college entrance exam that many high school students focus on, some students don't see the purpose in trying to do their best on them. You need to remember, however, that everyone enters the workforce eventually—whether you get a job right out of high school, work part time while continuing your education, or go through extensive postsecondary training. WorkKeys stresses skills development important for every type of employment.

Why do some of the test questions seem irrelevant to my career choice?

Since WorkKeys questions relate to a variety of real-life experiences, the situations sometimes deal with work environments that do not interest particular students. Even very difficult exams, such as the Law School Admission Test or the Graduate Record Examination, routinely contain analytical reasoning questions that feature taxi drivers, executives, carpet sellers, professors, bellhops, architects, and numerous other workers. The basic skills needed to solve a legal question, configure a computer, or schedule employee vacations may be similar for all these tests. And while some WorkKeys test questions can be fairly easy, others are quite difficult—to measure the widest possible range of skills.

Can I study for the tests?

Since WorkKeys measures applied skills, you can't cram to memorize answers for the tests. However, you can use these practice sets to see and work with typical WorkKeys test questions.

What happens to the test results?

You can use your WorkKeys results to get a better picture of jobs you are ready for and to improve areas where your skills are weak. Employers can use the results to determine your qualifications for positions in their organizations. And schools can use the information—along with input from employers—to ensure that their curriculum provides adequate work skills training to meet business needs.