

BESTS Policies

- The Belin-Blank Center reserves the right to modify or waive these policies. The Belin-Blank Exceptional Student Talent Search (BESTS) is subject to the Belin-Blank Center's [privacy policy](#).
- In all cases except I-Excel dates coordinated by the school or ACT registrations coordinated by the school, the Belin-Blank Center will not share scores unless given explicit written permission by the parent. While the Center does not offer school score-sending as a service, we recommend that families share scores with educators at the child's school, particularly those involved in making decisions about the child's academic progress. For I-Excel and ACT registrations coordinated by the school, the school contact organizing testing will have access to the scores resulting from the test date and will be able to distribute scores to families.
- Discounts for Free/Reduced Price Lunch are at the discretion of the Belin-Blank Center, which may request verification of eligibility. The number of partial fee waivers for Free/Reduced Price Lunch is limited per academic year on a first-come, first-served basis. If this reduced fee is still too great a financial burden, the Center will work with the family to make a financial arrangement that allows the student to participate.
- Students may test through BESTS a maximum of once per academic year.
- Test data may be used in aggregate and unidentifiable form to contribute to test norms.

ACT

General

- Students who register for the ACT through the Belin-Blank Center are subject to all [ACT policies](#) and must agree to ACT's [Terms and Conditions](#).
- Parents can save money by registering for an ACT date by that date's early registration deadline.
- Current fees are listed at belinblank.org/talent-search. The fee is lower for students eligible for Free/Reduced Price Lunch. If this reduced fee is still too great a financial burden, the Center will work with the family to make a financial arrangement that allows the student to participate.

Signing Up

The Belin-Blank Center provides the following registration process for high-ability 7th-9th graders.

1. Parents register their child as a member of the Belin-Blank Exceptional Student Talent Search. Students will receive a voucher for the ACT. Please note that vouchers expire at the end of the second calendar year of the academic year. For instance, if a student signs up during the 2022-23 academic year, their voucher will be valid until the end of December 2023.
2. Parents visit the ACT website and [register](#) for the test date of their choice, using the voucher they received.
 - Register for "ACT, No Writing" and make sure to add Belin-Blank (BESTS) as a recipient for your scores with code 4862.
3. Once the registration is processed and after you have uploaded a photo (only required for students 13 or older), you will be able to print an admission ticket from your ACT account. You **must** bring the admission ticket and [acceptable identification](#) to the testing location the day of the test.
4. (Optional) Special Accommodations for Disability or English Language Learner
Students with documented disabilities may be eligible for [accommodations](#) through ACT. Students testing through BESTS should complete and pay for their registration, then follow the instructions for working with their school officials to submit appropriate information to ACT for accommodations approval.
 - There are two types of accommodations – [this infographic](#) can help you decide which one is the best fit.
 - Accommodations are also available through ACT for [English Language Learners](#).
 - **Please note that you will need to apply for and be approved by ACT for accommodations to receive those accommodations. [Learn more on ACT's website.](#)**

Preparing for the Test

There are a few things students (and parents) should know before the test:

- To take an above-level test (such as ACT for 7th-9th graders), we recommend that students have at least one score in the 95th percentile or above on a core subject of a grade-level test, such as the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP). By definition, an above-level test was designed for older students, so it is best-suited to students who are maxing out grade-level tests in at least one subject. Sometimes even if students meet the 95th-percentile guideline on a grade-level test, they or their parents may be nervous about taking such a challenging test. The guideline is intended to prevent students from being overly frustrated by the testing experience. Students can try out sample questions [for free](#) to gauge the level of the test and whether it is a good fit.
- Some families ask if taking ACT early impacts college admissions later. It should not impact admissions in any way. A college cannot request scores from ACT -- the family or student must agree and pay to have scores sent to a college from ACT. It is the student's choice to indicate what test date they wish to have released. When the student takes the ACT as a junior/senior in high school, they can then choose to send just those scores to the college(s) of their choice, and that process will not be affected by their previous scores taken when in 7th, 8th, or 9th grade.
- We recommend that students take a look at the [sample items](#) to get comfortable with the format of the test. We **do not** recommend that students study for the test.

Test Day

- You must bring the admission ticket and [acceptable identification](#) to the testing location the day of the test.

After the Test

- You will receive an email when your scores are available, and you will be able to view them using your MyACT account. Score reports for ACT are generally available 2-8 weeks after the test date. Once you have the scores, you'll then be able to enter the scores in our interpretation system, *IDEAL Solutions[®] for STEM Acceleration*, using a code for a free interpretation guide (enclosed in the confirmation email you received following registration). If you have misplaced that email, please contact us at assessment@belinblank.org for instructions.
- The results can be helpful for curriculum planning. One option, depending on the results, may be [subject acceleration](#). Additional options include [whole grade acceleration](#) or [early entrance to college](#).
- Students who score highly on an above-level test may be eligible to take courses online through the [Iowa Online AP Academy \(IOAPA\)](#), which provides above-level coursework online without a course fee (currently available in Iowa only). Only educators may register students for IOAPA. [Learn more.](#)
- Educators can help their student sign up for the ACT as an above-level test. Educators can invite parents to register their children individually (you can [download a sample letter](#) to send to parents). Parents will have to manually share results with the school.