

Parent Tips:

How to Help Your Child Prepare for Standardized Tests

Standardized tests currently play a major role in the United States public schools. Your child may take one or more standardized tests during the school year, and your child's teacher may spend class time on test preparation throughout the year. As a parent, there are a number of ways that you can support your child before and after taking a standardized test, as well as a number of ways you can support your child's learning habits on a daily basis that will help her be more prepared when it's time to be tested.

Before the Test

Be prepared

Many teachers will send information home about testing schedules and class preparation plans. Information that you should know includes:

- What is the test and what will it measure?
- Will the test results affect your child, school, or both?
- Are there ways that you can help your child prepare for the test?

Help your child in areas that are difficult for her

If your child has struggled with a particular area or subject in the past, you may be able to help her overcome some of that difficulty by providing some extra practice. Many workbooks target test preparation by offering practice exercises and questions like the ones students see on the test. Focus your practice on your child's weaknesses rather than her strengths so that she doesn't get bored with the exercises (Narang, 2008).

Give your child a chance to practice

If your child has trouble taking tests, try practicing test questions and studying new words. Your child's school or the library may have some samples to use. Keep the sessions short, and set small, manageable goals so that the extra practice boosts your child's confidence (Narang, 2008).

On Test Day

Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep and eats a healthy breakfast

Many teachers report that students who don't do well on tests haven't gotten enough sleep, and haven't eaten breakfast on the morning of the test. Doing both of these things will ensure that your child is working at full capacity (Narang, 2008).

Make sure your child is prepared

Some schools may supply the tools your child needs for the test, such as pencils, an eraser, paper, and a calculator. Others may require the students to bring those materials themselves. Check with your child's teacher to see if you need to provide your child with any of these materials. Also, check to see whether your child will be able to make up the test if she is sick on test day (Narang, 2008).

Remain positive

Staying calm will help your child stay calm. If she gets nervous about the test or is likely to experience anxiety during the test, help her practice some relaxation techniques that she can try once she's taking the test (Narang, 2008).

After the Test

What about the results?

Assessments vary from test to test, but the test scores should include information that helps you interpret the results. Talk with your child's teacher if you have any questions about the test results.

On a Daily Basis

In addition to these strategies, there are a number of ways that you can maximize your child's learning capabilities throughout the school year, which can lead to confident test-taking. Some of these strategies include:

- Assisting your child with homework and ensuring that your child is completing all homework assignments
- Helping her to develop good study habits, thinking skills, and a positive attitude towards education from an early age
- Ensuring that your child has good attendance at school
- Staying in communication with your child's teacher
- Encouraging your child to read as much as possible, and to increase her vocabulary - even reading magazines, newspapers, and comic books regularly will help improve her reading skills
- Looking for educational games and programs that engage your child
- Helping your child learn how to follow directions carefully (Dietel, 2008; IRA (2002); Narang, 2008).

Finally, remember that standardized tests and grading systems are not perfect; each format has its own limitations. As you help your child do her best on the tests she takes and in all of her schoolwork, also remind her that testing is just one part of her education. With your support and involvement, she will be well on her way to her own bright future.