

Test-Taking Strategies

There are several pointers every test-taker should know before sitting for an exam. Read these and go over them with you student before the big day. Make sure your child understands each strategy and how to employ it during the test.

Be sure to follow all directions carefully. Listen carefully to any instructions from the teacher, and read the directions to each section of the test carefully (especially the constructed response and written questions). Be sure you understand exactly what you have to do for each part of the test before you begin answering questions.

Manage your time wisely. Standardized tests can be very long with only a specified amount of time to complete them. Go through the test twice. The first time, answer all the questions that you know. Mark (in the test booklet, not the answer sheet) the questions that you don't know and then come back to them only after you've finished answering the ones you know. With the time remaining, go back and work on those questions that you don't immediately know. This way, you're sure to have answered those questions that you know in the allotted time. If time runs out, you'll have still answered most of the questions.

For multiple choice questions, try to answer the question in your mind before looking at your choices. If you're right, one of the choices will match your answer. If you're wrong, look at the answer choices and try again. If you still don't know the answer, mark the question and come back to it later.

Be careful when you skip a question. You can always skip a question and come back to it. Mark it and return to it after you've answered all the easy questions. But be careful!! When you skip a question in the test booklet, you must also skip that question on the answer sheet. It may seem obvious to skip that line on the answer sheet when you skip the question, but in the heated atmosphere of a testing situation, it's easy to forget to do this.

Should you guess? YES! State tests usually don't take off points for answering incorrectly; they just don't add any! So, go ahead and guess if you don't know the answer. First, eliminate the answers that are obviously wrong to you. Then narrow the choices down and guess. If you narrowed a multiple choice question down to two possible answers, the odds are 50/50 that you're going to guess correctly!

Make helpful marks in the test booklet. It is usually okay to make marks in the test booklet. Underline important words in reading passages, make notes in the margins, do whatever is necessary for you to understand and organize the information for your own use.

Review your work before turning in your test. Make sure there are no stray marks on your answer sheet and that your writing is clear and legible.