



# Test Taking

Tests are used to measure a student's knowledge and skills. Often the results of a test do not give a clear picture of the student's knowledge because of test anxiety. Children who become very anxious at the thought of taking a test often convince themselves they will fail. They panic because the questions on the test don't look reasonably close to what was studied!

There are several common reasons for test anxiety, sometimes it is due to poor preparation or poor skills. Sometimes it is due to negative test taking experience, a negative attitude about school, low self-confidence or a combination of all these.

The study skills we've talked about earlier can help in the situation of test anxiety. Skills such as taking good notes, identifying important information and developing ways to remember important information can be a big help.

Let's deal with the first reason for test anxiety and poor test performance—**lack of preparation**. More times than not the child knows about the test in advance. Some teachers, especially in the elementary grades, inform parents when tests will be given. Knowing when the test will be given and what material will be covered can help you and your child establish a study schedule for preparing for the test.

Schedule studying nightly, for several evenings before the test. Know how long you can expect your child to concentrate at one time. Research shows that first and second grade children can work no longer than 15 minutes without a break. Third and fourth grade children can study a little longer, about 20 minutes, while fifth and sixth graders can work productively for closer to half an hour.

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Know your child, don't expect too much, and schedule breaks.

During the scheduled study time, ask your child what material he or she thinks might be on the test. Go over questions at the end of each section or the end of the chapter. Look at words that are in bold, refer to class notes. Pay special attention to diagrams, charts, and maps.

Together with the child develop a sample test. Each of you can then take the test together. This can be an important strategy especially for young children, because it makes studying more fun. When learning spelling words, for example, it can be very helpful to have the child read the words to you while you take the test.

All of these strategies can be used to prepare and build confidence, but what about overcoming fear? Use the time before you take the sample test as an opportunity to practice some relaxation techniques that can help get rid of some of the anxiety of test taking.

Have the child take a few deep breaths. Suggest he closes his eyes and "visualizes" himself doing well on the test. Then look at the test to know what's being covered. If anxiety strikes during the test do the deep breathing and visualizing again.

Practicing test taking and relaxation techniques can help children be prepared, overcome test anxiety, and give a clearer picture of the child's actual knowledge and skills.