Test-Taking Tips

These common sense approaches can help reduce anxiety and improve test performance in students.

Before the Test

Preparation is the key to success. Before each test, ask the teacher – and write down – what material the test will cover and what types of questions to expect. You can then focus yourr studies and practice answering questions in the same format. Also, adopt these other good study habits:

- Avoid cramming. Instead, study a little every day.
- Review the material more than one time.
- Answer practice questions in textbooks or online.
- Teach the subject to your parent or a study partner.
- Be sure to get a good night's sleep and have a healthy breakfast before the test.

On the Day of the Test

No matter what the subject or test format, coach yourself to:

- Listen closely to verbal directions and read carefully any instructions on the test itself.
- Ask the teacher to explain any instructions you doesn't understand.
- Scan the entire test for the types of questions and use this information to pace yourself.
- Jot down memory aids, formulas, or important facts in the margins.
- Answer the questions you know first and come back to the harder ones later, remembering to mark unanswered questions so they're easy to find.

Types of Test Questions

Tests are often a blend of several types of questions. Review and practice these strategies for various question types with your child.

True-False

- Circle key words in the question.
- Remember: If any part of the answer is false, the whole thing is false.
- Watch for words like "never," "always," "every," "all," "none," and "only"; they generally indicate a false answer.
- Rarely leave a blank – a guess has a 50-50 chance of being right!

Multiple Choice

- Read the whole question carefully and try to decide what the answer is before reading any of the options.
- Read *all* of the answer options, then choose the one that most closely matches her answer.
- When unsure, eliminate answers that are clearly incorrect.
- If forced to guess, choose the longest, most detailed answer.

Open Book

- Prepare a sheet with important facts or formulas to avoid spending time looking them up.
- Mark important pages with sticky notes or paper clips.
- Practice using the index to look up specific topics.
- Skip questions when the answer can't be found quickly; mark them to come back to later.
- *Do not copy* from the book! Use the book as a guide to write answers in your own words.

Fill-in-the-Blank

- Read the sentence carefully for clues about the type of information needed – a person's name, a number, a fact.
- Watch for grammar clues. For example, the word "an" before the blank indicates that the answer starts with a vowel.
- Notice the type of blanks in the sentence. One short blank calls for a single word answer. A longer blank indicates a longer answer, such as a phrase.

Matching

- Scan the whole column of possible matches rather than stopping at the first likely answer.
- Answer the questions you're sure of first.
- Cross out choices as you use them.
- Keep going through the columns to make more matches.
- Avoid guessing until your absolutely stumped.

Essay Questions

- Before writing, make an outline to organize main ideas and facts to include in the answer.
- Focus on only one idea per paragraph.
- State the main point in the first sentence of each paragraph.
- Avoid unsupported statements – include relevant details and examples.
- If time is running out, write at least an outline of the whole answer.

After the Test

You can learn almost as much from your mistakes on a test as from studying. Go over test results and read the teacher's comments. Look for patterns of errors to help in future studies.

- Were questions left blank due to a lack of time? Practice judging time needed and pacing your work.
- Were any errors due to not following instructions? Remember to read directions carefully and circle important words.
- Were mistakes made because you didn't know the subject thoroughly? Next time, set aside more study time or try new study strategies.

When you feel confident in your test-taking skills, you'll have less test anxiety and be able to focus on showing what you've learned – and that's what tests are all about.

Source: **GreatSchools** **http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/test-taking-tips/**