

TESTING -- HOW TO HELP

Often parents ask educators how to support their child through "high-stakes" testing. Together, parents and teachers can help support children in having a successful and positive test-taking experience! Here are some tips to help your child be a successful test taker:

Discuss the importance of testing.

Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep before a test, and make sure your child eats properly the day of a test.

Maintain a pleasant home environment and avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Ensure that your child is present during testing (children perform better when taking tests in their groups rather than at a make-up time).

If your child is disappointed after taking a test, reassure him or her that there will be plenty of opportunities to improve and succeed.

Wish your child good luck before he or she leaves for school.

Tips to give your child about taking tests:

Relax. Just do the best you can.

Listen to and read instructions carefully.

If you have a question or do not understand something, raise your hand and ask for assistance. Your teacher may not be able to help, but there is nothing to lose by asking.

Read all test questions carefully.

Answer the easiest questions first. It gives your brain a chance to warm up. It is OK to skip a hard question and come back to it later.

It makes no difference who finishes first or last. Use as much of the available time as you need.

Don't change an answer unless you have a good reason to do so. Your first choice is usually correct.

Be aware of key words such as "all," "now," "always," "never," "only," "exactly."

In multiple choice questions the longest answer should be considered, since test writers want to be sure the correct answer is accurate.

When two answers are opposites, one of them is often correct.

Watch for negative words like "not," "no," "never."

TIPS FOR DE-STRESSING BEFORE A TEST:

It's normal for kids to get nervous before a significant test. This is actually a good thing. That adrenaline boost can be helpful, but it can be hard to obtain and maintain that perfect level of nervousness. If your child is overly worried in your opinion, try these tips:

Reassure your child

Tell your child that the test will be used to evaluate how well a school or school district is educating its students. It's important for kids to have a sense of the broader context.

Put the test in perspective

Explain that test scores are looked at along with many other pieces of information in determining your child's achievement level. Her grades and progress over time, for example, are also very important. This may be a big test, but it is still just one test!

Take a deep breath

If your child is a very nervous test-taker, have her do deep breathing exercises before the test. She can take a deep breath and count to ten. Then have her take shorter deep breaths in between passages or sections of the test -- counting to three only. This exercise is fast and simple, but it really works!

Make sure he gets his rest

Make sure your child will be comfortable and alert on the day of the test. He should get a good night's sleep the night before and a light breakfast the morning of the test. (A heavy breakfast can make you sleepy.)

Dress in layers

Have your child dress comfortably in layers so that he can take clothes off or put them on, depending on the temperature of the room.

Do your best

Finally, tell your child that the test will have some difficult questions on it. All of the questions are not supposed to be easy. Explain that he may not be able to answer all of the questions, and that's expected. All he/she can do is try her best, and that's okay!