

# Help Your Child Do Better on Tests



**F**rom spelling quizzes to final exams, tests are a part of school life. Few students are naturally good at taking tests. Most need help in learning test-taking skills.

Fortunately, you can help your child relax and work “smarter” on tests. Here are some specific ways to help your child do better on tests.

## Quick Tips

## REDUCING TEST ANXIETY

**S**ome kids suffer from test anxiety. They worry so much about the test that it affects their performance. Here are some things to say that will help soothe your child's nerves:

- “Some people are naturally good at basketball, while others need to learn the skills. The same is true about taking tests. If you don't have good test-taking skills, don't worry. You can learn them. We can work on your test-taking skills together.”
- “Good test scores aren't everything. Test scores are usually just *part* of your grade. Attendance, attitude, effort and daily grades are also important.”



- “One test score—high *or* low—is just one test score. If most of your grades show that you understand a subject, one low test score won't be a disaster.”
- “Remember, I love you no matter what. I expect you to *do* your best—but that doesn't mean you have to *be* the best on every test. No matter what your test grades, my love will never fail.”

## Test-Taking Tips

- **Remind your child to listen and follow directions.** Before giving a test, teachers tell students things they need to know—and that can make the difference between a high or low score. Should students try to guess if they're not sure of an answer? Should the essay question be double-spaced? Make sure your child listens to what the teacher has to say.
- **Give your child practice following directions.** Make a game of it by asking your child to follow a recipe or to look through a news article and circle all the nouns. Try timing your child completing these tasks. Tests sometimes have a time limit.
- **Make sure your child is physically ready to take the test.** Aside from studying, the next best preparation is a good night's sleep and a nutritious breakfast before the test. Encourage your child to wear layers that can be removed—like a sweater over a T-shirt. Being too hot or too cold can affect concentration at test time.



## 6 Ways Your Child Can Be Test-Smart

Nobody's ever going to love tests. But children can learn how to relax and do their best. Give your child these tips:

- 1 **Don't cram.** In the week before the test, have your child schedule several shorter study sessions. This will reduce pressure and help your student remember more.
- 2 **Read the directions.** If a math test says, "Show all your work," your child must write down all calculations. Your student should ask the teacher if anything seems unclear.
- 3 **Skim the test quickly.** There's nothing worse than discovering that there are two essay questions to answer—and five minutes left in the class period. By skimming, your child will know what to expect and can leave time at the end for a longer question.
- 4 **Don't be afraid to skip a question.** Some children freeze when they see a question they can't answer. Teach your child to move on to an easier question. If there's time, your child can always come back to try those unanswered questions again.
- 5 **Check work.** Often, it's careless mistakes (adding instead of multiplying, for example) that lead to a low grade.
- 6 **Look for "clue words."** On true-false or multiple-choice tests, there are some words that often indicate an answer is wrong. Words like *all*, *none*, *everybody* and *always* may mean your child can eliminate that choice.

## Tips for Spelling Tests

In many schools, a weekly spelling test is a fact of life. Here are some ways to make studying spelling words more fun:

- **Focus on test improvements** rather than test scores. Each time your child gets more words correct, that's a time to celebrate.
- **Vary study methods.** Don't just spell words out loud. Have your child write the words in the air or on a board. Make up silly songs or raps with the words.
- **Study in small spurts.** Have your child spell a word at each red light—or before dessert—or in the bathtub—or while doing dishes together.

You can help your child do better on tests. And you can make sure your child knows that, while a test may measure certain knowledge and abilities, no test can ever measure a child's worth.

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