

Questions Parents Ask About ...

Tests & Quizzes



The Learning Advisor Series



Testing ... Testing ...

Tests and quizzes will be always be an important part of your child's school career. And it's never too early—or too late—to help him* build good study skills and test-taking habits.

Many students are relieved to find out that kids who “ace” tests aren't necessarily smarter. They just know how to take tests successfully. And higher grades aren't the only reward of being a good test taker. Kids who study effectively often spend less time studying than students who “cram.”

As an added bonus, test-taking skills help your child outside of school in areas such as sports tryouts, driving tests and employment tests.

This booklet raises questions parents frequently ask about tests and quizzes, and provides answers that will help you help your child succeed in school.



**Note: Every child is unique, so we often use the singular pronoun. We'll alternate the use of “he/him” and “she/her” throughout this booklet.*

I know I can't study for my child. But I really want her to succeed. What can I do at home to help my child succeed on tests?

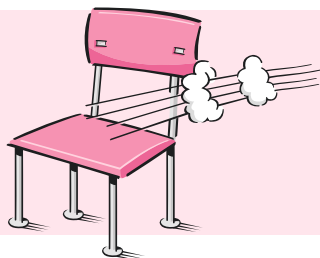


You're right—studying for tests is your child's job. But you can help her by following these suggestions:

- » **Make school a priority.** Encourage good attendance. Talk with your child about what she's learning. And keep in touch with your child's teachers. They can recommend ways to help at home.
- » **Avoid putting too much pressure** on your child. If you're overly worried about tests, she probably will be, too. That can make it difficult for her to do well.
- » **Judge your child's success** by her *effort* more than her *grades*. If she studies hard but fails, compliment her for trying. Help her learn from her mistakes.
- » **Build your child's confidence.** Tell her you believe she can—and will—succeed. And show your pride when she does!
- » **Review test terms with your child,** such as *match*, *list*, *compare* and *contrast*. These words appear on many kinds of tests.
- » **Help with learning.** Go through flash cards with your child. Call out spelling words. Or let her teach *you* something!
- » **Encourage reading.** Reading builds your daughter's vocabulary, which will help her on just about any exam.

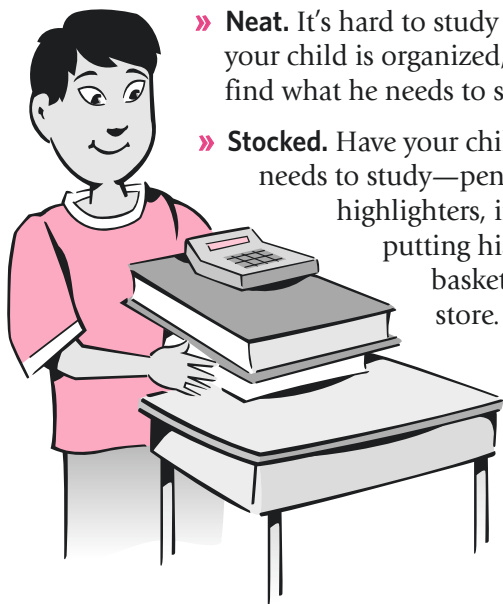


When it comes to studying for tests and quizzes, my son can't sit still! As soon as he opens his notebook, he jumps up to grab his textbook or look for a highlighter. What can I do to help him focus?



Help your child choose a spot in your house to be his “study space.” A desk in a bedroom, a seat at the kitchen table—anywhere can work, as long as the place is:

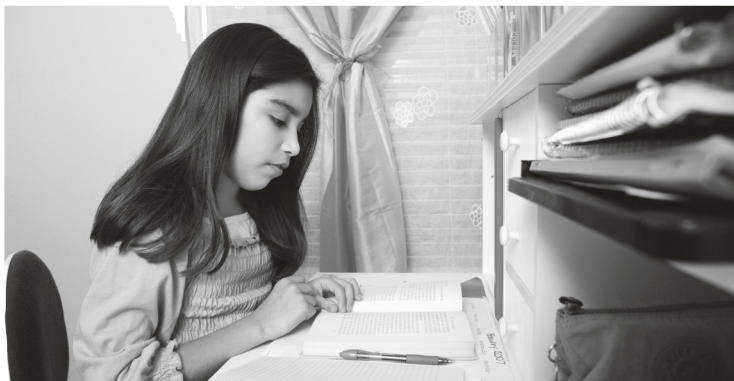
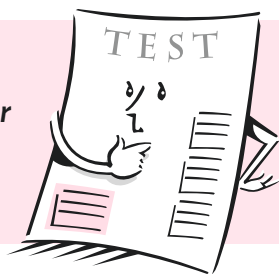
- » **Quiet.** Your child is more likely to focus if he isn't distracted. This means no TV, phone calls or other interruptions.
- » **Well lit.** It's hard to read—and stay awake—if you don't have good lighting.
- » **Comfortable.** Some children like studying at a table, while others sprawl out on the floor. See what works best for your child.



- » **Neat.** It's hard to study in a messy environment. If your child is organized, it will be easier for him to find what he needs to study.
- » **Stocked.** Have your child gather everything he needs to study—pencils, pens, a calculator, highlighters, index cards, etc. Consider putting his supplies in a box or basket to make them easier to store.

The key is to establish a study routine. Expect your child to work in the same place every day. Once he gets used to his spot, he will concentrate better there.

What should my daughter be doing to prepare for upcoming classroom tests and quizzes?



The days leading up to a test can be very productive for your daughter. As a test approaches, encourage her to:

- » **Get information.** Have her ask her teacher about the test. What subjects will it cover? What kinds of questions will be asked?
- » **Predict questions.** Suggest that she guess what the questions will be and answer them.
- » **Organize materials.** Suggest that she gather all her notes, homework, handouts and quizzes. She can also look at old tests to learn from past mistakes, such as failing to read the directions carefully.
- » **Make a study plan.** Have her schedule time to review for the test over several days. Don't forget to include study breaks!
- » **Study under "test conditions."** Limit her TV time. Monitor other distractions. This can improve memory at test time.

My son reads the chapter before test time—but can't always recall what he read! How can I help him improve his memory?



There are many memorization tricks that may help your son remember what he reads. Consider showing him how to use:

- » **Acronyms.** Your son can make a word out of the first letter of terms to be memorized. For example, **HOMES** for the Great Lakes (**H**uron, **O**ntario, **M**ichigan, **E**rie, **S**uperior).
- » **Sentences.** Help your son use the first letter of each word to make a silly sentence, such as “**M**y **v**ery **e**xcellent **m**other **j**ust **s**erved **u**s **n**oodles” for the planets in order of their distance from the sun: **M**ercury, **V**enus, **E**arth, **M**ars, **J**upiter, **S**aturn, **U**ranus, **N**eptune.



- » **Flash cards.** For vocabulary, he can write each word on the front of a card and the definition on the back. For geography, write the name of a country on one side and its capital city on the reverse. Start by dividing the cards into small groups. Have him review one group at a time, shuffling the cards occasionally. Have your son keep the cards handy so he can study whenever he has a free moment.

- » **Grouping.** Have him study similar things together. For example, instead of memorizing the capitals of every state or province in the country, he should divide them into geographic regions. Then he can memorize each region.
- » **Recitation.** It can help to repeat facts out loud. Instead of reciting mindlessly, have your son focus on the *meaning* of what he is saying.
- » **Rhymes.** Think of rhymes that describe facts, such as “In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.”
- » **Images.** Suggest that your son draw or imagine a picture of what’s being studied, or find one in a book. Then he can recall that image during the test.
- » **Personalization.** Have your son make personal connections to information. For instance, a relative’s birthday might also be a famous date in history.
- » **Singing.** Songs are great learning tools. Have your son replace words in a familiar song with facts he needs to remember.
- » **Storytelling.** Encourage your son to make up a story about what he’s trying to memorize. For example, what would it have been like to have been at the Boston Tea Party?



My daughter is about to have her first test on a whole textbook chapter. How can I help her prepare?



You can help by teaching your daughter these steps for studying a textbook chapter:

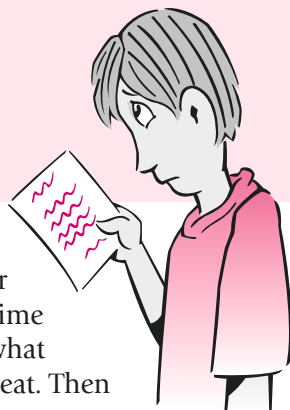
1. **Skim the chapter.** Read the title and all the section headings to get a general idea of the topic.
2. **Look at the illustrations,** charts and graphs. They often highlight the most important information.
3. **Read the introduction** and the summary.
4. **Read the review questions** at the end of the chapter. Keep them in mind as you read the chapter.
5. **Read the chapter section by section.** Take each bold-faced section heading and turn it into a question. For example, if the heading is Causes of the American Revolution, ask, "What were the causes of the American Revolution?" Then read to answer the question.
6. **Use flash cards to review.** On one side of a card, write a key term or vocabulary word from the chapter. These are usually in bold-faced type. On the other side of the card,

write the definition. The textbook may provide a glossary with definitions of the key terms.



7. **Answer the review questions** at the end of the chapter. Some textbooks also have sample test questions at the back of the book.

My son just came home from school—with a note from the teacher saying he was caught cheating! What should I do?



Your first instinct may be to ground him for life. Instead, experts suggest setting aside time to talk and really listen to your son. Ask him what happened. Find out why he felt the need to cheat. Then follow these guidelines:

If your child was fearful of what you would do if he got a bad grade, make sure he knows that low grades would not be the end of your love for him. You'd be more concerned than angry—and are always willing to help him study.

If your child cheated because of his own high expectations, tell him not to put too much emphasis on grades. Be sure he knows you'd rather he *do his best* than *be the best*.

If your child thinks cheating is "no big deal" because "everyone is doing it," tell him that cheating is wrong. Cheaters rob themselves of learning opportunities and are unfair to honest students. It's the same as stealing.

If your child let another student copy his test answers, find out why.

- *Was he afraid this student wouldn't like him?* Let your child know that a real friend would never reject him for not doing what he wants.
- *Is this student bullying him?* If this is the case, talk to the teacher immediately. Find out how the school handles bullying.

Consider talking with your child about how to turn down an invitation to cheat. Your child could say "I'd like to help you, but I think cheating is wrong. And we could get into trouble."

I know not all test questions are multiple choice. How can I help my daughter prepare for different kinds of test questions?



It's true—not all tests are the same. Different kinds of test questions call for slightly different test-taking skills. Here are tips for answering test questions.

Multiple Choice Questions

These questions are becoming the most common test questions, especially on standardized tests. Teach your child to:

- » **Think about what the answer is** before reading the choices.
- » **Read *all* of the answer choices** before choosing one. Look for words in bold, or words like *not*, *only*, *except for*, *all of the above* or *none of the above*.
- » **Cross out wrong answers** to narrow down the options.
- » **Remember only one answer is the “best” answer.** There may be more than one “right” answer to a multiple choice test question, but only one answer is the “best.”
- » **Make sure answers are properly marked.** If answers are recorded on a separate answer sheet, be sure that the answer to question one is in the space for question one.

Matching Questions

On matching tests, it's important for your child to remember to:

- » **Read the directions** carefully.
- » **Notice whether one column has more items** than the other. If so, some answers may not be used or may be used twice.
- » **Match the easiest items first.** Then the remaining ones may be less confusing.

True/False Questions

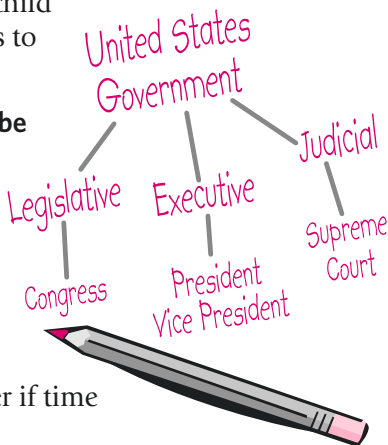
For true/false questions, remind your child to:

- » **Read the entire statement**—more than once. For the answer to be true, all of the statement must be true.
- » **Beware of absolute terms**, such as *always* or *never*. These words are more likely to be in false statements.
- » **Guess, rather than leave a question blank**, if unanswered questions will be marked incorrect. She has a 50 percent chance of being right!

Essay Questions

Essay questions ask your child to respond in more depth. Suggest that your child:

- » **Take a few minutes to gather her thoughts.** Making an outline or a web can help your child organize the key ideas she wants to include in her essay.
- » **Ask if spelling and grammar will be graded.** If they will be, your child should leave a few minutes at the end of the test to check her spelling.
- » **Write neatly.** The teacher can't grade an essay she can't read.
- » **Include an outline** or brief answer if time is running out.



If your child is anxious about upcoming tests, have her ask her teacher for a sample question. Your child's teacher wants your daughter to succeed as much as you do, and will be glad to help.

My son gets extremely anxious before a test—even if he has prepared all week. What can I do to help him get over his “test stress”?



It's common for kids to get nervous before tests. Some children think the world will end if they get even one answer wrong, while others are convinced they'll go blank and forget how to spell their own names! To reduce your son's anxiety and increase his chances for success, he should:

- » **Avoid staying up late.** There is no need to “cram” all night if your child has studied well. Being active earlier in the day (not right before bed) can help him get to sleep.
- » **Eat healthy meals.** Some experts say fresh fruits and vegetables can help reduce stress. But eating a large meal right before the test is risky—your son needs his body to focus on thinking, not digesting!
- » **Wear a favorite outfit.** Your son should pick one that makes him feel confident and comfortable.
- » **Learn to relax.** Some kids find it helpful to close their eyes and take a few deep breaths before a test.
- » **Be positive.** Encourage your son to think positive thoughts, like “I can do it!” Give him compliments, such as “I’m proud of how hard you studied. You’re ready to do a great job on this test.”
- » **Face fears.** If your son seems too anxious, ask what he’s afraid of. You may be able to reassure him. His teacher can also help.



My daughter has a big test tomorrow. She has been studying hard all week! What last words of advice should I give her?



You've reviewed flash cards with your daughter, motivated her and calmed her test-related worries. The only thing left to do is for her to take the test—and you can't go into the classroom with her. But you can give her these final tips:

» **Read the directions carefully.** This can't be emphasized enough! You may lose points on the test if you don't follow the directions. Ask the teacher for help if something isn't clear.



» **Skim the test questions before you begin.** Organize your thoughts and plan how much time you'll spend on each question.

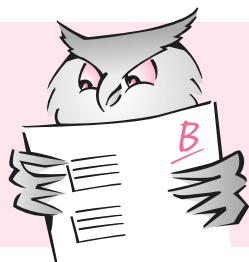
» **Answer the easy questions first.** This will help you build the confidence to tackle the tougher ones. Mark the more difficult questions and go back to them later.

» **Circle the key words** in the harder questions. This will help you identify the main point.

» **Ask if there's a penalty for guessing.** If not, guess on hard questions when time is almost up. Experts say the first guess is often right!

» **Use all the time you are given.** If you finish early, go back and check your answers. Did you follow the instructions? Are your answers neat?

My son brought home a graded test. What can I do to help him learn from it?



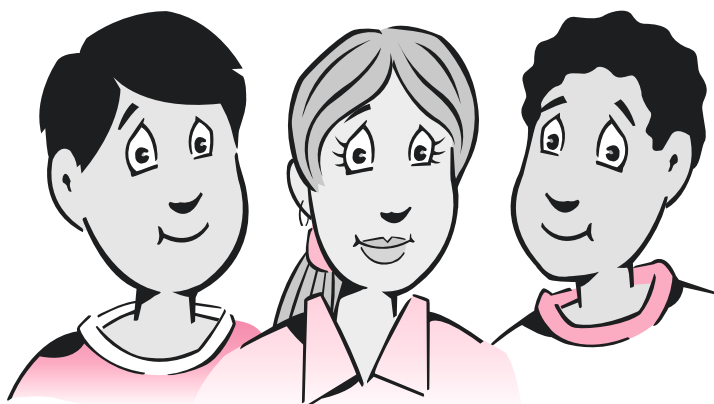
Whether your child brought home an A⁺ or not, he can learn something by reviewing the test. Sit down with your son and discuss:

- » **What went right.** First, notice the things your son did well. Was his work neat? Did one of his memorization techniques work well? Encourage him to keep up the good work!
- » **What went wrong.** Help him figure out why answers were incorrect. Did he misread the question? Should he have studied more? Were the answers too messy for the teacher to read? Did he run out of time?
- » **How to improve.** Help your child think of ways to avoid making similar mistakes on the next test. If he failed the test, see if a makeup exam will be offered.
- » **The teacher's comments.** These are especially useful. Ask the teacher to explain anything that is unclear.



- » **What to do with it.** Your child should keep tests and study materials in an organized file. They will come in handy when he reviews for the final exam.

Congratulate your child for doing his best!



***Taking tests may be the hardest part of being a student.
But when kids are armed with knowledge and test-taking
skills, they will be up to the challenge!***



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