

Test Smarts



Tests and quizzes affect more than your child's grades. Studying for them helps her learn more and remember the material. And tests let her teachers see where she might need more work.

Here are strategies to help your youngster get organized, study effectively, and stay calm on test day.

Get organized

Learning to be organized teaches your child good study habits for now and the future. Try these ideas.

Create a study spot. Have your youngster find a quiet place to work (bedroom, dining room). Include a box or a basket where he can keep study materials (notes, handouts) and another container for school supplies (pencils, erasers). Put reference materials like a dictionary, a thesaurus, and an atlas on a nearby shelf or table.

Keep a calendar. Suggest that he mark test and quiz dates on his own calendar with special stickers or drawings. He can count down the days to a test by putting a star or check mark on each day he studies.



Gather materials. When your child comes home from school or after-school care, have him set aside 10 minutes to unpack his backpack and go through his binder with you. He can pull out papers or books that

he needs to study (spelling words, science terms) and put them in his study spot. That way, he'll know where to find them when it's time to work.

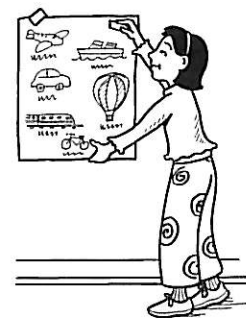
Make a daily study date. Encourage your youngster to study a little each day rather than waiting until the night before a test. He's likely to really understand the material instead of just memorizing it. That means doing better on the test—and remembering more in the long run.

Learn study strategies

Your youngster can get the most out of the time she spends studying using these tips.

Work on one thing at a time. To help your child concentrate on the task at hand, suggest that she take out only one subject at a time to study. For instance, she should finish her vocabulary words before she starts on her multiplication tables.

Make memory boosters. Let your youngster use a sheet of paper to create a mini-poster filled with things she's studying. If she's learning about transportation, for example, her poster might be covered with drawings or magazine pictures of different ways to travel. Have her display the posters where she will see them every day, such as on her bedroom wall or on the refrigerator.



Predict test questions. As your child studies, encourage her to list questions she thinks might be on the test. She can save her questions for a day and then use them as a practice test to see how well she knows the answers.

Combine study methods. Suggest that your youngster learn information in more than one way. For example, if she's being tested on the solar system, she could read about it and then make a model using different-sized balls. Afterward, she might make flash cards with vocabulary words like *galaxy* and *comet*.

Ask questions. When your child doesn't understand something, let her know that it's okay to ask for help. Remind her that she can bring her questions to you or her teacher.

continued



Prepare the night before

Keeping your child’s morning routine simple can help her get off to a good start on test days. Here are tasks to do the night before that will make things go smoothly when she wakes up.

Pack for school. Encourage your youngster to make time before bed to put books and supplies in her backpack. That way, everything will be ready to go in the morning.

Decide what to wear. Take the guesswork out of getting dressed in the morning by having her lay out her outfit as part of her bedtime routine.

Plan breakfast. It’s important for your child to eat well on test day (and every day). To save time in the morning, talk before bed about what she wants for breakfast the next day. Remind her that a balanced meal will help her stay alert (examples: eggs, toast, and juice; cereal, fresh fruit, and fat-free milk).

Go to bed on time. Your youngster will be able to concentrate better if she’s well rested. *Tip:* School-aged children should get 10–11 hours of sleep each night.

Prevent test stress

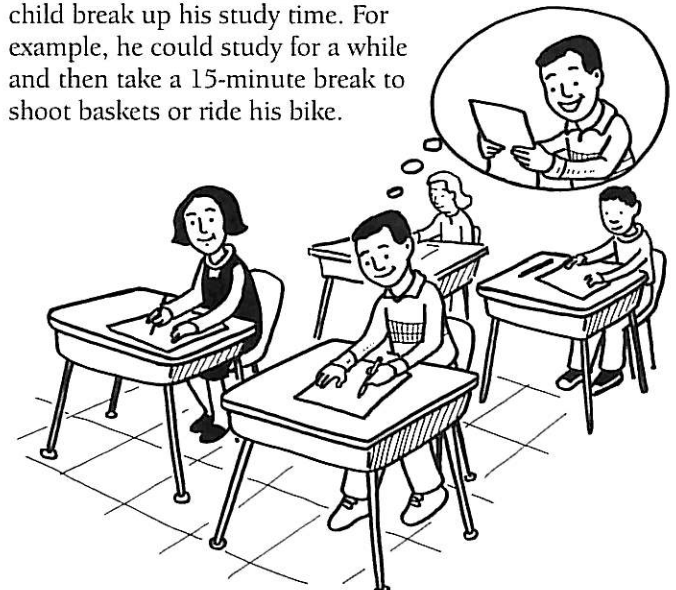
Tests make some students nervous. Share these suggestions to help your youngster feel calm and confident.

Put tests into perspective. Explain to your child that while tests are important, what counts is how he does on all his work. Knowing that everything doesn’t hinge on one test can take some of the pressure off.

Think positively. He might imagine answering every question correctly and getting a good grade. Picturing this outcome instead of a negative one can boost his confidence and inspire him to study hard.

Focus on yourself. If a classmate is worried about a test or quiz, your youngster should remind himself of what *he’s* doing to get ready. Explain that everyone is different—what’s hard for one student might be easy for another.

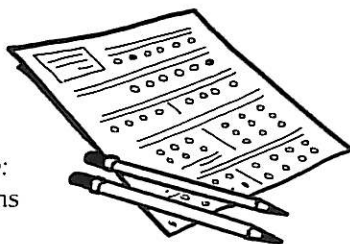
Take time to relax. Suggest that your child break up his study time. For example, he could study for a while and then take a 15-minute break to shoot baskets or ride his bike.



Standardized test success

When your youngster has a standardized test, share these helpful guidelines:

- Read the instructions word for word. Paying careful attention increases the chance that your child will complete problems correctly the first time. *Tip:* Watch for key words in questions (“always,” “never”).



- Skim the test. He will see how many questions there are and can estimate how much time to spend on each. As he works, he can check how he’s doing against the clock.

- Make sure answers go in the right place. On standardized tests, students often fill in circles on answer sheets that computers can score. If your youngster skips a question, he should be sure to skip that line on the answer sheet.

- Concentrate on your own work. Glancing at other students who seem to race through questions can make your child lose his place—and his confidence.

- Use all available time. There are no extra points for turning a test in early. If your youngster finishes before time is up, suggest that he check for mistakes or try to answer questions he skipped.

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