

Standardized Test Secrets

Confident. Prepared. Relaxed. Well rested. These are the traits of successful test-takers. How can you ensure that your child does his best on standardized tests? Try these ideas to help before, during, and after tests.

Editor's Note: We chose to use a boy in this report, but the examples apply to both boys and girls.



Before:

Understand the purpose. Your child may wonder why he has to take standardized tests. Let him know that the tests measure how students in his school are doing compared with other schools and districts. The tests also show areas he needs to work on and how his skills change over time. Plus, they help teachers and administrators do their jobs better.

Support the teacher's efforts. Chances are your child's teacher will give him many activities to prepare for the test. She may also share information about ways to practice at home. Remind your youngster that these exercises will help him do his best. Be on the lookout for testing schedules and other information from the school that you'll need to keep him on track.

Reassure your child. Standardized tests are very different from classroom tests. For example, about half of the questions are expected to be too difficult for the average student. The tests are also put together so that many test-takers won't finish within the time limit. Let your youngster know that even if he misses many questions, he can still score well.

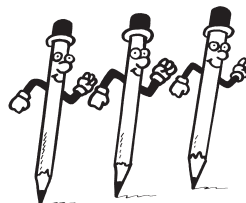
Use practice sheets. Most standardized tests require separate answer sheets with small circles to be filled in with pencil. Filling in the circles quickly and efficiently is tough for many children. Your child should use firm, up-and-down pencil strokes. It's important for him to completely erase answers he changes and to avoid stray marks. You can make a homemade practice sheet with rows of small circles. Or the teacher might have samples to share.

Get in shape. Two essential ingredients for successful test taking are a good night's rest and a healthy breakfast. If your

child is worried about the test, a warm bath and read-aloud time can help take his mind off it. A well-balanced breakfast will give him energy on test day. The menu might include cereal with milk, or eggs and toast, plus fruit or juice. Be careful not to offer more food than normal—being too full can make him sluggish.

During:

Take extra supplies. Your school may provide all the supplies your youngster needs for the test. Just in case, it's a good idea to give him several pencils with medium-sharp points (a very sharp pencil can break easily). A good eraser and a few sheets of blank scrap paper are also useful. For added energy, snacks of raisins, grapes, or granola bars are great for breaks.



Follow directions. Encourage your child to read all directions slowly and carefully. If he's allowed to write in the test booklet, have him circle or underline important words. If he is confused about what to do, tell him to ask the teacher or test administrator right away.

Use time wisely. Most standardized tests are divided into timed sections. At the beginning of each section, your youngster should scan all the questions. That will give him some idea of how much

