
INSIGHTS

FOR PARENTS

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Help Your Children Improve in Test-Taking

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- ❖ INSIGHTS FOR PARENTS is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Adapted from material prepared by the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education.

It's good to be concerned about taking a test. It's not good to get "test anxiety." This is excessive worry about doing well on a test, and it can mean disaster for a student.

Students who suffer from test anxiety tend to worry about success in school, especially doing well on tests. They worry about the future and are extremely self-critical. Instead of feeling challenged by the prospect of success, they become afraid of failure. This makes them anxious about tests and their own abilities.

Ultimately, they become so worked up that they feel incompetent about the subject matter or the test.

It doesn't help to tell a child to relax, to think about something else or to stop worrying. But there are ways to reduce test anxiety.

Encourage your child to do these things:

- ❖ Space studying over days or weeks. Understand the information and relate it to what is already known. Review it more than once.
- ❖ Don't "cram" the night before – cramming increases anxiety which interferes with clear thinking. Get a good night's sleep. Rest, exercise and eating well are as important to test-taking as they are to other schoolwork.
- ❖ Read the directions carefully when the teacher hands out the test. If you don't understand them, ask the teacher to explain.
- ❖ Look quickly at the entire examination to see what types of questions are included and, if possible, the number of points for each. This will help you pace yourself.
- ❖ In taking an essay exam, read all the questions first and use the margin for noting phrases that relate to the answers. These phrases will help in writing the essay answer.
- ❖ If you don't know the answer to a question, skip it and go on. Don't waste time worrying about it. Mark it so you can identify it as unanswered. If you have time at the end of the exam, return to the unanswered question(s).

You can be a great help to your children if you will observe these do's and don't's about tests and testing:

- ❖ Don't be too anxious about a child's test scores. If you put too much emphasis on test scores, this can upset a child.
- ❖ Do encourage children. Praise them for the things they do well. If they feel good about themselves, they will do their best. Children who are afraid of failing are more likely to become anxious when taking tests and more likely to make mistakes.

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- ❖ Don't judge a child on the basis of a single test score. Test scores are not perfect measures of what a child can do. There are many other things that might influence a test score. For example, a child can be affected by the way he or she is feeling, the setting in the classroom and the attitude of the teacher. Remember, also, that one test is simply one test.
- ❖ Meet with your children's teachers as often as possible to discuss their progress. Ask the teachers to suggest activities for you and your children to do at home to help prepare for tests and improve your children's understanding of schoolwork. Parents and teachers should work together to benefit students.
- ❖ Make sure your child attends school regularly. Remember, tests do reflect children's overall achievement. The more effort and energy a child puts into learning, the more likely he or she will do well on tests.
- ❖ Provide a quiet, comfortable place for studying at home.
- ❖ Make sure that your child is well rested on school days and especially the day of a test. Children who are tired are less able to pay attention in class or to handle the demands of a test.
- ❖ Give your child a well rounded diet. A healthy body leads to a healthy, active mind. Most schools provide free breakfast and lunch for economically disadvantaged students. If you believe your child qualifies, talk to the school principal.
- ❖ Provide books and magazines for your youngster to read at home. By reading new materials, a child will learn new words that might appear on a test. Ask your child's teacher about a suggested outside reading list or get suggestions from the public library.