

Parent Update

Examining Education from
a Christian Perspective



Helping Your Child Prepare for Tests

**What is your responsibility in
helping your child prepare for tests?**

**Regardless of your child's typical
test performance, you can help him
in improving his test-preparation and
test-taking skills.**

How do you normally respond when your child tells you he has a test tomorrow? Do you greet the news with high expectations, confident in your child's ability to use his test-taking and study skills to make a good grade? Or do you cringe with fear, unsure of your child's ability to do well on the test and unconfident in your ability to help him? Whether you approach test day with high expectations and excitement or with apprehension and dread, test taking can be a positive experience for both you and your child.

The following suggestions will help your child improve his test-preparation and test-taking skills. These ideas will also assist you in helping your child improve in these areas.

Before the Test

Begin test preparation well in advance of the test date.

Encourage your child to begin test preparation at least four or five days before the test. Fifteen minutes of daily review and study several nights before a test is more effective than last-minute cramming. Studying ahead of time often results in higher test scores and helps your child remember test material much longer.

Designate a home study area. Your child should study at a desk or table in a quiet, well-lit area of the home. Emphasize to your child the importance of minimizing distractions so that he can focus on studying for the test. Watching television, talking to friends on the phone, or texting while studying for a test are unnecessary distractions that should be avoided.

Identify and study test material. Studying the right information is crucial for test success. Common sources of test questions include teacher handouts, previous tests and quizzes, homework assignments, and test study guides. Teachers also develop their questions from class notes and classroom reading assignments.

Maintain a regular schedule for eating, resting, and exercising. Your child's mental alertness on test day is affected by his physical fitness. Checking to see that your child gets plenty of sleep, eats nutritious meals, and exercises daily is as important to test-taking as quizzing him on possible test questions. Remember that a healthy body is a must for your child to meet the demands of a test.

During the Test

Encourage your child to follow the four test-taking strategies below.

- 1. Read and follow the test directions.** Read the test directions twice before answering any of the questions. After reading the directions the first time, circle or underline the key words when reading the directions for the second time. This practice helps your child identify the types of questions on the test, where to place his answers, and the time limits for the test.
- 2. Skim the test before starting it.** Before answering the first test question, skim the entire test. Take no more than two minutes to complete this process. Skimming the test enables your child to identify the number and types of questions (matching, true-false, fill-in-the-blank, etc.) on the test, point value for each type of question, difficulty level of the questions, and estimation of the time needed to complete the test.
- 3. Schedule time to complete the test.** Applying several guidelines will help your child effectively manage his test-taking time. First, answer the easy questions. Second, mark the difficult questions and return to them later. Third, reserve time at the end of the test to answer the difficult questions. Finally, allow enough time to check all test answers.
- 4. Read each test question carefully.** This strategy involves (1) reading the entire question before attempting to answer it, (2) reading every possible answer (matching and multiple-choice questions) before selecting an answer, (3) identifying the key words in each question, and (4) rereading any question you do not understand. Taking time to read each test question carefully will help your child reduce careless mistakes.

After the Test

Review the test results. When your child gives you his graded test, review his performance. Identify areas where he performed well; also pinpoint and analyze questions that he answered incorrectly. This evaluation process will assist you in discussing the test results with your child.

Discuss the test with your child. Schedule time to discuss the test results with your child. Find out if he followed directions, read the questions carefully, and double-checked his answers. Be sure to go over test questions that he answered incorrectly and try to determine the reason(s) for missing these items. Perhaps the reason for an incorrect

response comes from not understanding key words in a question or from not reading the question carefully. Finally, discuss all written comments made by the teacher.

Ask the teacher for help. After reviewing the test with your child, encourage him to ask his teacher to explain the answers to the test question(s) that both of you were unable to work. If poor test grades necessitate a parent-teacher conference, schedule the conference now. Don't wait! A teamwork approach to improving your child's test grades is a must for improving academic performance. The Bible says in Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

Explore other avenues of help if needed. If your child continues to struggle with subject content on the test or with class material that will be assessed on future tests, do not wait to get help. Instead, find out if your child's teacher offers help class or tutoring sessions before or after school. If not, perhaps a classmate or older student would be willing to help your child. You may need to even hire a tutor if such help is needed. The key is your child receiving help so that he learns the material needed to perform to the best of his academic ability.

Conclusion

Some children seem to do well on tests with minimal effort, while others constantly struggle to make good grades. Regardless of your child's typical test performance, you can help him in improving his test-taking skills and in making test day a positive experience. Make sure you understand your role in helping your child prepare for tests. Following the suggestions identified above will increase your child's confidence in taking tests, which will ultimately yield better results.

Brian Walker is assistant executive director of the Tennessee Association of Christian Schools. He has served in Christian school education for 40 years. Brian and his wife Kristy have two children.