

Help Your Child Do Better on Tests

Reducing Test Anxiety

Some kids suffer from “test anxiety”. They worry so much about the test that they worry themselves into a poor performance. Here are some things you can tell your child to help soothe his/her nerves:

- There are specific skills involved in taking tests that others have learned—and, your child can learn them, too. Some people are naturally good at basketball, while others need to learn the skills. The same is true about taking tests. If you don’t have test taking skills, don’t worry. You can learn them.
- Good test scores aren’t everything. Make sure your child knows how important attendance, attitude, homework, and daily grades are. Test scores are usually just part of the grade.
- One test score—good or bad—is just one test score. If most of your child’s grades show he/she understands a subject, one low test score won’t be a disaster.
- Make sure your child knows you love him no matter what. Your child should know that you expect him/her to do his or her best—but that doesn’t mean your child has to be the best on every test.

Test-Taking Tips

- ✓ Remind your child to listen and follow directions. Before giving a test, teachers tell students things they need to know—and that can make the difference between a good or bad score.
- ✓ Give your child practice in following directions. Make a game of it. Give your child a recipe and ask him/her to follow it.
- ✓ Make sure your child is physically ready to take the test. Aside from studying, the next best preparation is a good night’s sleep before the test. Make sure your child eats a good breakfast. Encourage your child to wear layers of clothing—there’s nothing worse than being too hot or too cold.

6 Ways Your Child Can Be Test Smart

1. Don’t cram. In the week before the test, schedule several shorter study sessions. Your child will feel less pressure...and he’ll remember more.

2. Read the directions. If the test says, “Show all of your work,” your child must show all of his/her work. If directions are confusing, your child should ask the teacher to clarify.
3. Skim the test quickly. There’s nothing worse than discovering that there are two essay questions to write...and five minutes left in the class period. By skimming, your child will know what to expect and can leave time at the end for a longer question.
4. Don’t be afraid to skip a question. Some children become paralyzed when they see a question they don’t know. Teach them to move on to a question they do know. If there’s time, they can always come back to try those questions one more time.
5. Check work. Often, it’s careless mistakes (adding instead of multiplying) that lead to a bad grade.
6. Look for clue words. On true-false or multiple-choice tests, there are some words that usually indicate an answer is wrong. Look for words like *all*, *none*, *everybody* and *always*, which probably mean your child can eliminate that choice.

Tips Just for Spelling Tests

In most schools, a weekly spelling test is a fact of life. Here are some ways to take the drudgery out of studying spelling words:

1. Focus on test improvement rather than test scores. Each time your child gets more words correct, that’s a time to celebrate.
2. Use all senses. Don’t just spell words out loud. Write the words in the air or on a special board. Make up silly songs or raps.
3. Study in small spurts. Spell a word at each red light...or before dessert...on in the bathtub...or while doing dishes together.