

Standardized Test *Secrets*

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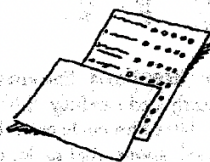
how much time to spend on each one. A simple method is to divide both the amount of time and number of questions in half. For instance, say he has 30 minutes and 20 questions. In the first 15 minutes, he should answer at least 10 questions.

Read every answer. It's often tempting for test takers to read multiple-choice questions and mark their answers immediately. The best approach on standardized tests is to read the question and all the answers. Then, go back and select the best one. Your child may need to practice this two-step approach until he feels comfortable.

Make good guesses. On most standardized tests, it's better to guess at an answer than to leave it blank. Coach your youngster to cross off the answers he's sure are wrong. That way, he can improve his chances of choosing the right answer. Remind him not to spend too much time on particularly hard questions. If he's completely unsure, he should make his best guess and move on.

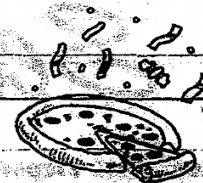
Stay in order. One mistake many children make is getting the questions and answers out of order. Encourage your youngster to keep his place on the answer sheet with a piece of blank paper. He can slide the paper down to reveal one row of circles at a time. Every few questions, he should make sure he's on the correct row.

Check answers. If your child reaches the end of a section with time left, he should go back and check his answers. Some test takers circle difficult questions as they work so they can easily find them later.



After:

Celebrate. Finishing a standardized test is an accomplishment. Give your child plenty of time to relax and wind down. Taking the test requires a lot of mental energy! Consider treating him to a special meal, a video rental, or a walk in the park. It's important to tell him how proud you are of his hard work.



Share the results. When you receive a copy of your child's scores, make sure you understand what they mean. Scores are often reported in percentiles and can be confusing, so ask the teacher for help. Talk with your youngster about the areas he did well in and any he needs to work on. He will probably be very curious and may ask lots of questions. Remind him that standardized tests are a tool to help him learn.

Tackling test anxiety

Taking standardized tests can be frightening and stressful. What should your youngster do if he freezes up on test day? Here are several tips he can try to help him relax and concentrate.

Steady breathing. Encourage your child to close his eyes and take slow, deep breaths. Have him pay attention to the way his chest rises and falls. Suggest that he count each time he inhales and exhales until he reaches 10.

Relaxed muscles. Your youngster can also tense and relax his muscles. Starting with his face, have him squeeze his muscles from his head to his toes, holding the muscles tense for five seconds and then releasing them.

Positive thinking. Ask your child to close his eyes and imagine himself confidently answering the questions. If he pictures himself doing well on the test, he's apt to feel more at ease.



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