

A Parent's Guide to Effective Study Habits

By: Lia Walters/ Special Education Facilitator



Parents often question why some students consistently achieve an A on their examinations and others do not, no matter how hard they try. The answer may be as simple as, those A students know how to take a test! Let's begin with some advice by Mark Twain: "The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking our complex overwhelming tasks in to small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one." Sounds good, so let us get started ourselves...



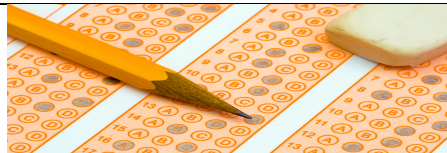
Topic 5: Test-Taking Strategies

Before starting the test:

Advise your child to:

- Read all the directions before they begin.
- Highlight key facts and/or underline what the question is asking.
- Survey the entire test before they answer any questions.
- Jot down information that they don't want to forget. Have them write it down on scrap paper or in the margin.

HELPFUL TIP # 1: Make sure that your child does all his/her homework and reading assignments which will help make sure your child is prepared for the test.



During the Test:

Have your child practice test-taking strategies at home by answering the easiest questions first, to keep them calm. Matching questions are often good to start with, because they provide a reminder of important terms and definitions.

Good strategies for answering multiple choice questions are to:

- Make sure students are looking for the central idea of each question.
- Ask them: What is the main point?
- Underline or highlight key words or phrases.
- Have them try to supply their own answer before choosing an alternative listed on the test.
- Eliminate wrong answers.
- Make sure they mark an answer for every question.

HELPFUL TIP # 2: Encourage your child to space out their studying and homework assignments so that they won't be forced to cram on the night before the test.

Essay Questions:

When answering essay questions, remember that the objective is to demonstrate how well the student can explain and support an idea, not just what they know. Before writing, make sure s/he carefully reads the entire essay question. Brainstorm and think before writing. The student should then map or outline the main points s/he wants to make, determine the order, and discuss how s/he is going to support the answer. Remember, a good response starts with a direct response to the question, mentions the topics or areas described in the question, uses background knowledge of the topic, and provides specific *as well as* general information. Lastly, the student should get in to the habit of leaving a little time at the end for proofreading, checking for grammar, punctuation and spelling errors.

HELPFUL TIP # 3: Encourage your child to do well, but *don't* pressure him/her. You may stress him/her out. It is important for your child to stay relaxed while taking a test.



Problem-Solving During the Exam:

When problem solving, have the student ask:

- What am I being asked to find?
- What do I need to know in order to find the answer?
- What information has been provided—perhaps in the question itself—that will help me to find the answer?
- How can I break the problem down into parts?
- What steps should I follow to solve the problem?
- Does the answer make sense?
- Does it answer the whole problem?

These problem-solving tools will help keep students calm, relaxed and able to troubleshoot any obstacle they may encounter.

HELPFUL TIP # 4: When you receive your test paper, go over it to determine areas of strength and weakness in your test-taking skills. If you have done poorly, learn from your mistakes! Always analyze your test to determine how you can improve future test results.

This month's strategy devoted to test-taking strategies is not only essential for high school students to succeed, but is a necessary tool to be used in their college careers. The benefit of incorporating successful test-taking skills enables the student to excel in all academic assessments now and in the future.

Resources:

Davis, L. and & Sirotowitz, S. (1996). *Study Strategies Made Easy: A Practical Plan for School Success*. Florida: Specialty Press Inc.

Dodge, J. (1995). *The Study Skills Handbook*. New York: Scholastic Inc.