

## Helpful Info about Standardized Tests

Objective tests require students to recognize correct answers from among a group of answers, which means that they must have recall abilities. There are certain literacy skills that students need to perform well and these may differ from the kinds of skills that are used in the classroom. The skills and abilities that help a student to perform well on a test are sometimes test specific; they only occur on a test and not in a real learning situation.

It is extremely important to remember that the test is an unauthentic situation and the students must learn the role of test taker in order to perform better. Students must be made to feel comfortable about taking the test or anxiety will cause the students to score worse than they could under better circumstances. Preparation builds confidence and confidence will lead to better performance.

However, teaching problem solving strategies is important for more than just test taking, because these skills will be used in all kinds of learning situations.

To perform well on a standardized test, students must have:

1. Mastery of the basic skill being measured
2. The ability to demonstrate the skill in a test situation

Many children have mastered basic skills, yet in a testing situation are unable to demonstrate that mastery. Example: they may know their subtraction facts, yet be unable to answer this question correctly:

$$13 - \underline{\quad} = 6$$

- a. 19 (help kids watch for tricks like this!)
- b. 7
- c. 5
- d. 6

They need help to learn how to apply their knowledge to a testing situation.

## Effective Testing Preparation Should Be...

1. Intensive—in the time frame directly preceding the test, but only for short periods of time each day
2. Cooperative—teachers and students should work together to discuss and negotiate meaning; the teacher should model problem solving ideas and listen to the students ideas
3. Non-threatening—the mention of reward or punishment for test performance should never arise; this is not a competition but a chance for students to show what they know

## Teaching Strategies

1. Introduce the “testing atmosphere” before test time; this can include using sample tests with time limits, no teacher/peer help
2. Help students to acquire the ability to work independently for periods of time
3. Discuss wrong answers on practice tests with students so that they learn from mistakes
4. Introduce all these skills as learning skills and not just for the test
5. Discuss with your students the reasons for taking the test and how the scores are used
  - a. Testing helps teachers know what areas students have mastered
  - b. Helps teacher know where children need extra help
  - c. Lets parents know how their child ranks in comparison to other children
  - d. Scores can determine funding for school districts, class placement, and need for intervention

## Skills to Practice:

- learn to read directions clearly
- become familiar with testing vocabulary
- understand that some directions apply to the whole test and some just to certain parts
- pay close attention to mechanical instruction key words such as **most, usually, all, before, after, always, never** and so on; these words give insights to the conditions of the question
- read questions and passages slowly and carefully
- feel comfortable with the different types of questions that will be found on the test

## Tips for Students:

If you have difficulty with a question, try rewording it in your own words.

Read directions twice and underline key words.

From time to time check your answer sheet to be sure that the answer you are marking is the correct number on the answer sheet.

Try breaking the question down into smaller parts to see what is really being asked.

In multiple choice questions with reading passages, read the questions first, then the passage; this will help to center on the needed information.

Use the process of elimination; if you can eliminate two choices the chances of guessing correctly go from 25 to 50 percent.

The three most important things to remember (make sure the parents know these, too):

1. Get a good night's sleep every night the week of testing
2. Eat breakfast every morning during testing week!
3. Choose an answer for EVERY question, even if you have to guess. Don't leave any blank.

**Disclaimer:** This information is provided as a courtesy only. **Montessori for Everyone** bears no responsibility for testing scores or outcomes based on this information. Results will vary based on the test, teacher, student and many other factors.