



Test-Taking Tips for Educators

- ❑ Think like a test developer. They use “norm-referenced logic” – not criterion-reference thinking. The developers’ goal is to make sure that no one gets the questions all wrong and no one gets them all right. The student isn’t competing with the test; he or she is competing with the NORM group.
- ❑ Provide opportunities for students to “practice” test-taking skills throughout their learning. Are your students “doing math” in the same format as provided on the test? Do you work with analogies on a regular basis?
 - Write out directions consistently for classroom tests and activities and have students read and follow them. To bring home the point of the importance of reading and following directions, occasionally give students a set of directions that says only to answer certain questions (e.g., odd, even, those divisible by three). Most kids only have to have done the extra work once to realize the importance of reading directions.
 - Give kids the opportunity to “manage their time.” Occasionally place a time limit on classroom activities and tasks, as well as classroom tests. Give your students the opportunity to pace themselves, setting up a schedule to complete the test for task. Have them periodically check their progress against the clock. If kids are comfortable with completing a task within a certain amount of time, they won’t be thrown when faced with a time limit on a test.
 - Have kids “check their work” on a regular basis. Help them recognize “silly errors” they make when they don’t check or proofread their work. If students are in the habit of checking their work, it will come second nature on the test.
- ❑ Expose ALL students to ALL types of reading materials. Include fiction and nonfiction books as well as other forms of print – newspapers, magazines, recipes, instructions. Test makers draw on a wide variety of formats when choosing items to use to evaluate reading comprehension.
- ❑ Give students time to just read on a regular basis. Students who have this opportunity, score higher on both reading comprehension and vocabulary.
- ❑ Give opportunities to write – formally and informally. Students who are in habit of jotting down ideas about what they are going to write before they do the formal writing score higher on writing assessments than those who do not.
- ❑ Assign writing exercises that require students to practice different genres. Writing assessments on state and national levels usually ask students to explain something (expository writing), tell a fiction or nonfiction story (narrative writing), or persuade someone to act or change an opinion (persuasive).
- ❑ Talk with students about their writing. Coach them over time. Students who receive feedback regarding their writing score higher than those who do not.
- ❑ Expose your students to charts, graphs, maps, and data. Ask students to interpret them. Require students to create their own charts and graphs for



projects in your curriculum. Questions about data interpretation appear on most standardized tests.

- Incorporate math into all subject areas. Word problems presented as though they are real-life situations tend to give students more trouble on standardized tests than do computation problems.
- Praise your students for specific accomplishments and effort. Students who feel good about themselves and are not afraid to take risks and make mistakes, have lower test anxiety and do better on standardized tests.
- Express positive attitude about the testing. Students are highly influenced by their teachers' attitude. Make yours positive and contagious.
- As students take the tests, read over the questions yourself. This is an opportunity for you to see if the assessments align with your curriculum and the learning experiences you provide.