

PARENT TEACHING TIPS

... on Your children and Types of Tests in School

By Bill Welker, EdD

Of course, the best approach to prepare for a test is to master the subject matter by studying and reviewing periodically. Only through dedicated study can your child take a test with confidence. Just as an athlete needs to *practice, practice, practice* to become a champion in sports, a student must *study, study, study* in order to completely understand course material.

It is also important for your child to know what type a test the instructor is going to give. For example, if a teacher uses the word “discuss” during a review, the test will probably be an essay examination. However, should the instructor use the term “know” while reviewing, the test will most likely be true or false, multiple choice, matching or short answer in nature.

Below are guidelines for taking different types of tests:

True or False Tests

The following helpful hints that will aid in taking true or false tests:

1. Such words as “all, never, always, none and only” tend to be associated with false statements.
2. Broad or general statements that contain the words “sometimes, perhaps, seldom, and generally” are likely to be true.
3. Do not try to figure out a pattern.
4. The longer the statement, the more likely it will be true.
5. If there are two parts to a true or false statement, both parts must be true for the answer to be true.

Multiple Choice Tests

Multiple choice questions contain a stem (an incomplete statement or question), a flower (the correct answer), and thorns (the incorrect answers). Here are some ideas for taking multiple choice tests:

1. Attempt to complete the stem before looking at the answer choices.
2. Eliminate answers that do not complete the stem grammatically or logically.
3. Longer answers tend to be correct because more information needs to be included to make them correct.
4. Disregard any answers you know are wrong and concentrate on the possible correct answers.
5. If you have two completely opposite choices, one of them is usually right.
6. Correct answers often are more often found in the middle of your choices. When in doubt, select answer “C”.

Matching Tests

In matching tests, you are asked to pair two lists of facts or ideas. The following are helpful hints for such evaluation items:

1. Work from the column with the most information to the column with the least information.
2. Check to see if some answers can be used more than once.
3. Answer the questions you are sure of first.
4. Cross out items as you use them.

Short Answer Tests

You must complete a statement with names, dates, symbols, or other facts for

short answer tests. Below are some recommendations for this evaluation instrument:

1. If the short answer material is in paragraph form, read the entire paragraph before completing the blank space(s).
2. If you don't remember the exact word (when choices aren't given), answer with a synonym. You may get partial credit.
3. The length of the blank spaces or separations between words may give you a clue to the length of the word or words required to complete the answer.

Essay Tests

In taking essay tests, you must be able to assemble, organize and present material in an organized and easily understood manner. The following are some guidelines for essay tests:

1. Be sure you understand the various "terms" used in essay questions. Below are some examples:

- * *Illustrate* – Provide the best examples you can think of.
- * *Compare* – Present both similarities and differences.
- * *Outline* – Present the information in outline form, using main points supported by subtopics and facts.
- * *Explain* – Tell about, define or describe by using examples.
- * *Summarize* – Stress main points when answering such questions or statements.
- * *Trace* – Show a detailed history of the topic, event, or subject.

2. Give yourself enough time for each essay question.
3. Outline your answer before writing a response.

4. Give your own examples and don't "parrot" examples from the textbook.
5. Do not try to bluff your way through the answer. Your teacher will see through such evasive tactics.
6. Check your answers for correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
7. Try to be as neat as possible.

In conclusion, these guidelines are not absolutes; there are always exceptions. Although studying the material for a test is the most important factor, it is not the only standard for scoring well on an examination. Likewise, "Test-wiseness" is also a necessary skill to score well on examinations.

Parent Proverb

"Information is pretty thin stuff unless mixed with experience."

- Clarence Day

Next Month's Column: "Preparing for Final Exams and State Competency Tests"

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