

Test Taking Strategies

Time-Using Strategies

- Work as rapidly as you can, answering the easy items quickly
- Set up a schedule using the time assigned, so you have enough time to finish.
- Work at a pace that gets you through the test with a little time left over to review harder items.
- Mark items that require more time.
- Use extra time later to answer these harder items.

Error-Avoidance Strategies

- Read or listen to directions/instructions carefully; make sure you understand how to take the test and mark your answers.
- Read each item carefully to ensure you understand.
- As you read the stem, think of the right answer before you read the options.
- Mark or identify key words of phrases that help you understand what the item requires.
- Ask the person giving the test for help in understanding the item.
- Eliminate implausible choices.
- Erase stray marks on the answer sheet.
- Make sure that all test items have only one choice marked.
- Check all answers for correctness; change answers if you feel justified.

Guessing Strategies

- Always guess if you don't know the right choice -- unless there is a penalty for guessing (in which case you should guess only if you can narrow the choices down to two).
- Don't look for patterns in the answers you choose (good test makers don't have answer patterns).

Deductive Reasoning Strategies

- Eliminate choices that are obviously wrong and choose from the remaining choices.
- If two choices are similar or identical, don't choose either one.
- If two choices are overlapping, don't choose either one.
- Use information from other items, if possible, to help you answer an item.

Strategies to Lower Test Anxiety

- Provide students with appropriate test preparation practices
- Teach students to remain calm and composed during the test.
- Teaching students to remain focused on the task and not to wander.
- Urge students to avoid discussing the test with other students.
- Tell students not to be concerned with how other students are doing (e.g., finishing earlier). Speed is not a predictor of test performance.

NOTE: Test anxiety can be treated by a therapist. The treatment will serve the child well through life, as he/she continues to take tests into adulthood.

Advice for Parents/Caregivers/Teachers

- Encourage students to do their best but focus on the importance of learning (now and throughout life) rather than on one performance;
- Assure that students get a good night's sleep and proper nutrition (including hydration);
- Help students dress comfortably (if appropriate, ensure that glasses are clean and in good repair);
- Teach students relaxation techniques (e.g., closing the eyes and resting momentarily, releasing distracting thoughts from the mind, stretching, yawning, deep breathing).

Advice for Students

1. Your brain was born to learn, loves to learn, and knows how to learn.
2. You learn what you practice.
 - Practice is making mistakes, correcting mistakes, learning from them, and trying over, again and again.
 - Making and learning from mistakes is a natural and necessary part of learning.
3. You learn what you practice because when you are practicing your brain is growing new dendrites and connecting them at synapses. This *is* what learning is.
4. Learning takes time because you need time to grow and connect dendrites.
5. If you don't use it, you can lose it. Dendrites and synapses can begin to disappear if you don't use them (if you don't practice or use what you have learned).
6. Your emotions affect your brain's ability to learn, think and remember.
 - Self-doubt, fear, and other negative emotions prevent your brain from learning, thinking, and remembering.
 - Confidence, interest, and other positive emotions help your brain learn, think, and remember.
7. **REMEMBER:** You are a natural-born learner.