

Test Smarts

Tests and quizzes affect more than your child's grades. Studying for them helps her learn more and remember the material. And tests let her teachers see where she might need more work.

Here are strategies to help your youngster get organized, study effectively, and stay calm on test day.



Get organized

Learning to be organized teaches your child good study habits for now and the future. Try these ideas.

Create a study spot. Have your youngster find a quiet place to work (bedroom, dining room). Include a box or a basket where he can keep study materials (notes, handouts) and another container for school supplies (pencils, erasers). Put reference materials like a dictionary, a thesaurus, and an atlas on a nearby shelf or table.

Keep a calendar. Suggest that he mark test and quiz dates on his own calendar with special stickers or drawings. He can count down the days to a test by putting a star or check mark on each day he studies.



Gather materials. When your child comes home from school or after-school care, have him set aside 10 minutes to unpack his backpack and go through his binder with you. He can pull out papers or books that

he needs to study (spelling words, science terms) and put them in his study spot. That way, he'll know where to find them when it's time to work.

Make a daily study date. Encourage your youngster to study a little each day rather than waiting until the night before a test. He's likely to really understand the material instead of just memorizing it. That means doing better on the test—and remembering more in the long run.

Learn study strategies

Your youngster can get the most out of the time she spends studying using these tips.

Work on one thing at a time. To help your child concentrate on the task at hand, suggest that she take out only one subject at a time to study. For instance, she should finish her vocabulary words before she starts on her multiplication tables.



Make memory boosters. Let your youngster use a sheet of paper to create a mini-poster filled with things she's studying. If she's learning about transportation, for example, her poster might be covered with drawings or magazine pictures of different ways to travel. Have her display the posters where she will see them every day, such as on her bedroom wall or on the refrigerator.

Predict test questions. As your child studies, encourage her to list questions she thinks might be on the test. She can save her questions for a day and then use them as a practice test to see how well she knows the answers.

Combine study methods. Suggest that your youngster learn information in more than one way. For example, if she's being tested on the solar system, she could read about it and then make a model using different-sized balls. Afterward, she might make flash cards with vocabulary words like *galaxy* and *comet*.

Ask questions. When your child doesn't understand something, let her know that it's okay to ask for help. Remind her that she can bring her questions to you or her teacher.

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Prepare the night before

Keeping your child’s morning routine simple can help her get off to a good start on test days. Here are tasks to do the night before that will make things go smoothly when she wakes up.

Pack for school. Encourage your youngster to make time before bed to put books and supplies in her backpack. That way, everything will be ready to go in the morning.

Decide what to wear. Take the guesswork out of getting dressed in the morning by having her lay out her outfit as part of her bedtime routine.

Plan breakfast. It’s important for your child to eat well on test day (and every day). To save time in the morning, talk before bed about what she wants for breakfast the next day. Remind her that a balanced meal will help her stay alert (examples: eggs, toast, and juice; cereal, fresh fruit, and fat-free milk).

Go to bed on time. Your youngster will be able to concentrate better if she’s well rested. *Tip:* School-aged children should get 10–11 hours of sleep each night.

Prevent test stress

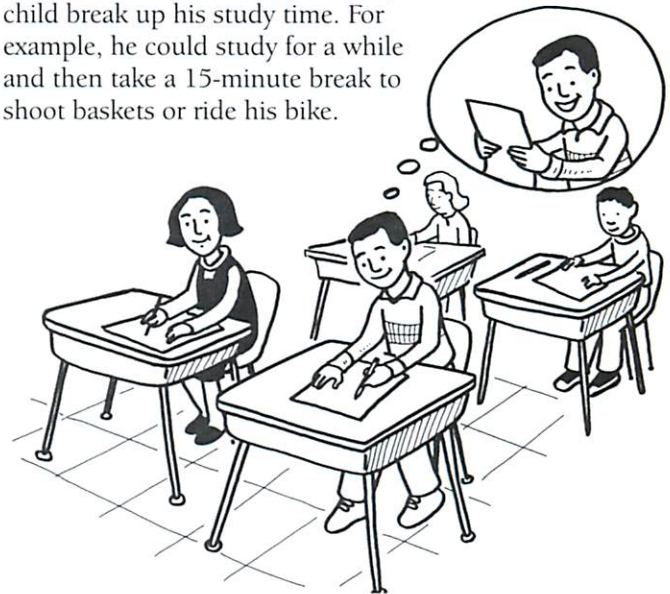
Tests make some students nervous. Share these suggestions to help your youngster feel calm and confident.

Put tests into perspective. Explain to your child that while tests are important, what counts is how he does on all his work. Knowing that everything doesn’t hinge on one test can take some of the pressure off.

Think positively. He might imagine answering every question correctly and getting a good grade. Picturing this outcome instead of a negative one can boost his confidence and inspire him to study hard.

Focus on yourself. If a classmate is worried about a test or quiz, your youngster should remind himself of what *he’s* doing to get ready. Explain that everyone is different—what’s hard for one student might be easy for another.

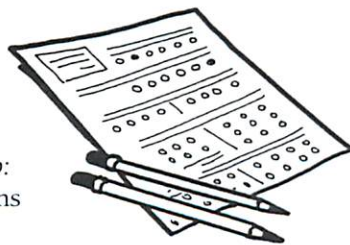
Take time to relax. Suggest that your child break up his study time. For example, he could study for a while and then take a 15-minute break to shoot baskets or ride his bike.



Standardized test success

When your youngster has a standardized test, share these helpful guidelines:

- Read the instructions word for word. Paying careful attention increases the chance that your child will complete problems correctly the first time. *Tip:* Watch for key words in questions (“always,” “never”).



- Skim the test. He will see how many questions there are and can estimate how much time to spend on each. As he works, he can check how he’s doing against the clock.

- Make sure answers go in the right place. On standardized tests, students often fill in circles on answer sheets that computers can score. If your youngster skips a question, he should be sure to skip that line on the answer sheet.

- Concentrate on your own work. Glancing at other students who seem to race through questions can make your child lose his place—and his confidence.

- Use all available time. There are no extra points for turning a test in early. If your youngster finishes before time is up, suggest that he check for mistakes or try to answer questions he skipped.

Home & School CONNECTION

Raising Respectful Children



When your youngster hears the word "respect," what does she think of? Explain that by being considerate of others' feelings, letting people know she appreciates them, or taking care of belongings, she's showing respect.

Point out that there are different types of respect—for ourselves, for others, for property, and for the environment. Then, try these ideas to help your child understand and practice all kinds of respect.

Respect for yourself

Your youngster may have heard the advice to treat others as she wants to be treated. If she respects herself, following this advice will be easier. Children who have self-respect are also more likely to resist peer pressure. Here are ways for your child to practice self-respect.

● **Know yourself.** Ask your youngster what she does well or is proud of (being a good friend, finishing a big project). Recognizing her traits and accomplishments will boost her self-respect.

● **Take a stand.** Teach your child to stand up for himself when someone makes fun of him or puts him down. It can be hard to look another child in the eye and say, "So what?" but your youngster will respect himself afterward. *Tip:* Role-play this at home so he'll feel more comfortable.

● **Stay healthy.** Encourage your child to take care of herself. Part of self-respect is keeping her body healthy and strong by exercising, eating nutritious foods, and avoiding harmful substances like drugs and cigarettes.

● **Do your best.** When your child works hard in school, he demonstrates self-respect. Taking advantage of every chance to learn shows that he cares about his own success.

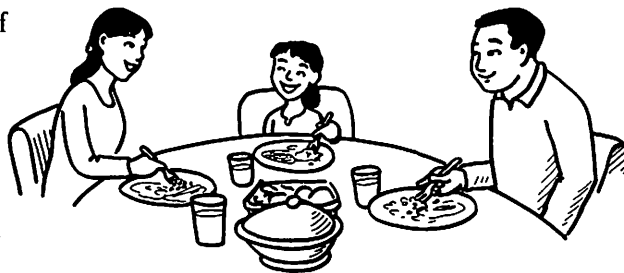


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"Please pass the peas"

Good table manners show respect for others. You can take advantage of family dinnertime to teach your child manners in a gentle way.

● Let your youngster know it's okay if she doesn't like a certain food—but she should show respect for the person who prepared it. If she's not sure she'll like something, suggest that she take a small portion. Or if you're visiting someone else's home, she might simply say, "No, thanks" if she doesn't want a particular food.



● Encourage your child to be considerate of others so they can enjoy their meals. For instance, she should chew

with her mouth closed and ask others to pass a dish instead of reaching across the table to take it.

● Keep conversations pleasant. You can set an example by bringing up appropriate topics (sports, school). Ask your youngster to save certain subjects for another time—for instance, she should steer clear of disagreements or jokes and stories that you wouldn't want to hear while eating.

Respect for others

Your child can show respect for people around him by treating them kindly and fairly. Try these suggestions.

● **Spot examples.** When a person shows consideration for you or your youngster, talk about it. Perhaps someone offered you a cart at the grocery store or opened the door for you at the movie theater. Explain that it's respectful to think about others' needs and feelings.

● **Respect teachers.** Following classroom rules is one way your child can respect her teacher. You can reinforce this at home by talking respectfully about her teacher. If she insists that a grade or a punishment is unfair, you might say, "I know you're disappointed, but I'm sure your teacher had a good reason." You can then calmly follow up with the teacher by phone or email to get more information.

● **Pay attention.** Your youngster can show respect during a conversation by giving the speaker his full attention. Making eye contact, nodding, and not interrupting all show that what the person says matters to him. *Tip:* Model this for your child when he speaks to you—avoid looking at your cell phone or texting while he's talking, for example.



● **Be a good sport.** When your child plays or watches a game, she should be considerate of the coaches, players on both teams, and officials. For instance, even if she disagrees with a referee's call, she should go on and play the game rather than complaining or making a negative comment. Explain that rituals like applauding politely when a visiting team enters the gym or shaking hands with opponents shows that respect is important in sports.

Respect for property

Tell your youngster that taking responsibility for his possessions and being careful with someone else's shows respect. The following tips can help.

● **Care for belongings.** Your child can protect the things you've given him or that he has purchased himself (toys,

clothes) by putting them away when he's not using them. That way, they won't get broken or torn, and they'll last longer. He can also help take care of your home—he shouldn't track mud across the carpet, and he should handle breakable items (vases, plates) carefully.

● **Show respect outdoors.** Teach your youngster to respect public and private property, like parks and lawns. For example, he should clean up after his dog, and walk on sidewalks and paths rather than on the grass.

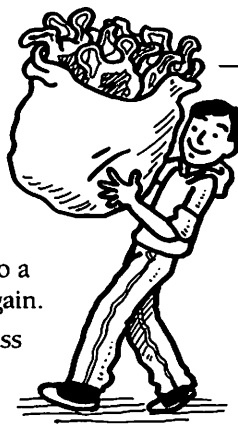


● **Be a good borrower.** The library is a great place to practice respecting shared materials. The next time you and your child go there, ask her to think of ways she can be considerate. For example, handling books carefully (not tearing or marking them) keeps them in good shape for others to enjoy. It's also important to return books on time so others can read them.

Reduce, reuse, recycle... respect

Your child can show respect for the earth by helping to keep it clean and healthy today—and for future generations. Share these ideas:

1. Ask your youngster to help you gather up clothing and toys he has outgrown. Donate them to a charitable organization so the items can be used again.
2. Work together to separate plastic, paper, and glass items for recycling pickup. Explain that recycling reduces the waste that's taking up space in



landfills. And recycling materials instead of making new ones saves natural resources.

3. Let your child carry your reusable shopping bags when you go to the store. Tell him that using these bags means you won't need to waste disposable paper or plastic bags.
4. When you go for walks, take along a trash bag and pick up trash you see along sidewalks and in grassy areas. *Idea:* As a family, participate in a community cleanup.

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