

General Strategies for Test Taking

Doing well on a test not only requires the student to know specific information, it also requires that the student be good at test taking. Students who prepare for a particular test, have an idea or plan for what to study, and think about how to answer the questions are likely to do well on a variety of tests. Some students need to be taught good test preparation and test-taking strategies to be successful. Teaching general test-taking strategies can help students be planful and strategic in their approach to answering questions during a test. Although some students use strategies when they take tests, others do not and need to be explicitly taught good test-taking skills.

How to Teach General Strategies

First, students should be taught that specific strategies for test taking can be helpful. They should be told how they can prepare and to take tests in strategic ways. To accomplish this goal, children should be taught several steps.

1. Prepare for the test by asking,
 - *What is the content of the test?* In order to be prepared, students need to find out exactly what the content of the test will be. Students should also consider what *will not* be on the test. Asking about specific materials they should study can also be helpful.
 - *What is the test format?* Will the questions on the test be multiple choice, fill in the blank, multiple choice, or essay? How specific will the questions be? When studying, students should think of questions and answers in the format of the test. Their teachers can help by giving practice tests.
2. Take the test carefully and be relaxed.
 - Be careful. Students should be prompted to take a test very carefully and not to rush. Breaking a test session down into two parts may be helpful. Using this strategy, students use the first half of the test session to take the test and the second half to check their work. This can assist in curbing students who want to rush to finish without checking.
 - Relax. Specifically instruct students to relax before taking a test. Give them time to do so. Consider having students stretch, breathe deeply, and even close their eyes and daydream before a test. Teacher comments can also be very important in helping students relax.

Who Should Learn General Strategies for Test Taking?

Most students can benefit from these strategies. Students who score low in planning could find these strategies particularly helpful because these students may have trouble developing test-taking strategies on their own. These strategies may also be helpful for students who are particularly anxious about taking tests.

Resource

Scruggs, T.E., & Mastropieri, M.A. (1992). *Teaching test-taking skills: Helping students show what they know*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.