

IT'S TEST TIME!

Advice on how to be a good test-taker

It's getting to be the end of the school year, and you know what that means. Right! Tests. Here's some practical advice you can use whenever you take a test. You may not like tests, but you have to respect them because they are a big part of school — and of life, for that matter.

Tests are important for many reasons. The obvious one is that tests measure how well you're learning. Learning is the key word here. Don't focus only on grades. Focus on getting knowledge. Why? Because you're going to need it later. The things you're learning now, you'll need in college. Knowledge is portable. You carry it with you wherever you go — to college and even beyond. Don't lose sight of this.

POINTERS FOR TAKING TESTS

Before the test

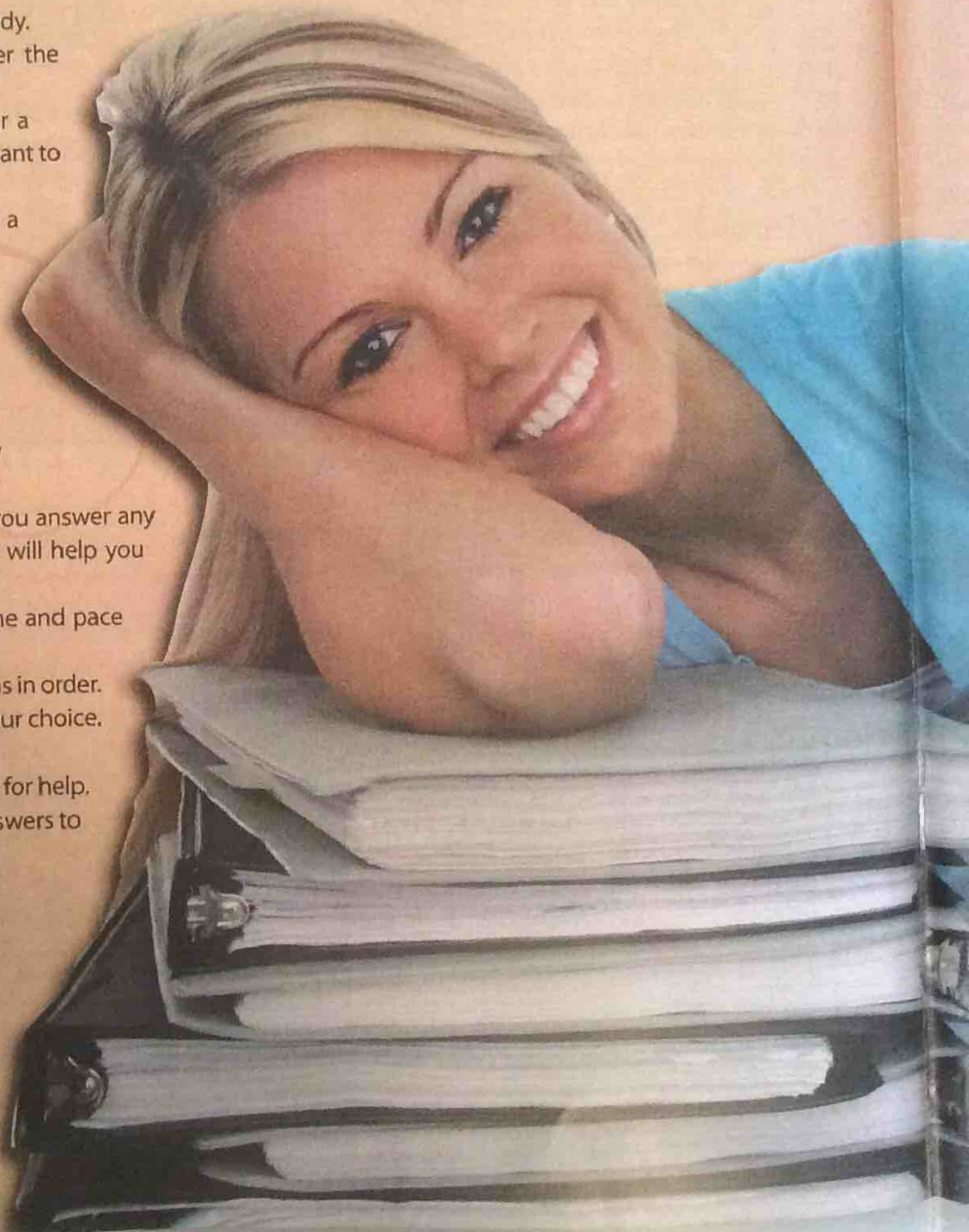
- Study regularly and ahead of time so you're ready.
- Cramming doesn't work. You won't remember the material very long. You lose the knowledge.
- Don't understand something? See the teacher a few days before the test to get an explanation. You want to understand it before it appears on the test.
- Improve your test-taking and your success as a student with good eating and sleeping habits. (Science backs this up.)
- Focus on gaining knowledge, and you'll always get a great grade.

During the test

- Before you begin, close your eyes for a few seconds, take some deep breaths, and relax.
- Read the test from beginning to end before you answer any questions. This overview will get you thinking and will help you manage your time.
- As you work through the test, watch your time and pace yourself, but don't race.
- Remember: You don't have to answer questions in order. Do the easy ones first or the harder ones first. It's your choice.
- Read each question twice before you answer.
- Don't understand a question? Ask the teacher for help.
- Before you turn in your test, look over your answers to check for careless mistakes.

After you get the test back

- Go over your corrected test to learn what you did wrong.
- Talk to your teacher. You want to understand why you got some questions wrong. (You're not arguing for points — you're trying to learn from your mistakes.)



- Keep your tests in a folder and track your grades.
- If you have general test-taking problems, talk to your teachers and your counselor.
- Think of each test as a way to improve as a test-taker.

Why is that last point so important? Read on!

TESTING IN SCHOOL

As long as you're a student, you'll have to take tests. And every time you take a test, you're developing a very important skill: the skill of TAKING TESTS.

Now you probably know about important tests like the SAT and ACT. You might have already taken one or the other. If you're planning on college (and I really hope you are), you know that your scores on SATs and ACTs, along with your high school grades, will determine whether or not you get into the college you want. They also determine whether or not you get scholarships and financial aid to help you pay for an expensive college education.

Want to be a lawyer? To get into a law school, you'll have to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). Want to be a doctor? Medical schools require that you take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). Every area of education beyond college requires an entrance test. There's a whole alphabet of them: GRE, DAT, GMAT, etc.

Let's say you finish law school, for example. Before you can become a lawyer, you must take the Bar Exam. Doctors have to take all kinds of tests to practice medicine. These professions won't accept "I'm just not good at taking tests" as an excuse for low scores.

Oh, and I don't want to forget this. If you're a student who leaves a final exam saying, "Boy, I'm glad I don't have to think about that anymore," you're wrong. There are college professors waiting for you in your future, and they expect you to bring your knowledge with you when you enter their classrooms.

TESTING IN LIFE

Tests are a big part of life, too. A job interview is just another kind of test. It gets you into the workplace. How do you succeed in the workplace? By taking different kinds of tests. Every day, someone will ask you, "How can we get this done?" "We have a problem. Can you solve it?" You are being asked to apply your knowledge. Getting a low a grade in "workplace tests" brings serious consequences. A pharmacist's mistake risks people's health. An engineer's mistake can risks people's lives. On the other hand, succeeding in workplace tests brings rewards.

So you need to become a great test taker. It's a life skill. When your next test is returned to you, don't just look at the grade. Look at the corrected test carefully.

Figure out why you got certain questions wrong. Can't figure one out? Ask your teacher to explain. Promise yourself to study even harder for the next test to do even better. You can do it. Remember this: I can give you all kinds of tips on taking tests, but tips alone won't earn you grades. Knowledge will. Get the knowledge, and you'll always get a great grade.

*By Dr. Robert Neuman, author of Are You Really Ready for College? A College Dean's 12 Secrets for Success—What High School Students Don't Know.
www.areyoureallyreadyforcollege.com*