Checklist: Test-Taking Strategies for Middle and High School Students

Pass these test-taking strategies to your students to maximize their ability to perform well on standardized tests.



Regarding Directions

- [ ] Remind students to read and listen to all directions carefully so they understand what is expected of them. Be sure students are familiar with concepts and vocabulary that are traditionally included in directions.
- [ ] Review the importance of budgeting time wisely. To gauge progress, guide them to divide the total number of test questions in half or by fourths. They should do the same with the number of minutes allotted for the test. At appropriate time intervals, they can check progress.
- [ ] Train them to turn text booklet pages with care so they don't accidentally miss a page.

Tackling Multiple Choice Questions

- [ ] Advise students to read all the answers and to answer any question to which they know the answer immediately.
- [ ] If they don't know the answer, explain how to eliminate wrong answers and to make educated guesses by using context clues and recognizing detractors.
- [ ] Have them mark or star any question they skip so it will be easier to go back to the question later. Emphasize the importance of leaving the corresponding answer space blank. Point out that making mistakes filling in ovals on the answer key or test booklet will have a negative impact on scores.

Dealing with Reading Passages

- [ ] Discuss the merits of reading all the questions associated with a passage before actually reading the passage. Point out

that doing so usually helps test-takers hone in on relevant points.

- [ ] Encourage students to highlight or underline key words, phrases, ideas and to go back to the text to find evidence or clues to support the answers.
- [ ] Remind them to utilize text features — captions, graphs, charts, and illustrations enhance the text and present relevant details.

Approaching Essay Questions

- [ ] Train students to use graphic organizers, webs, outlines, and/or bulleted lists to help them organize information.
- [ ] Remind them they can use the margins of the test booklet to jot down ideas.
- [ ] Advise them to read the question carefully so they are sure to target the response appropriately. The topic sentence should restate the question in some way.

Taking Account of Math Questions

- [ ] Stress the importance of showing their work and writing legibly. Even if a math answer is wrong, students may receive partial credit if their work can be read and evaluated.
- [ ] Have them check for careless errors such as forgetting to use labels, misplacing decimal points, or adding incorrectly.
- [ ] Remind them that questions may have more than one part and to answer all of them.

Wrapping Up

- [ ] Advise test-takers to go back and check their answers if time allows.
- [ ] Have them check the answer key periodically to make sure answers line up with questions.

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