

- keeps a notebook of assignments, and go over it with her every night to make sure she understands the assignments and completes them.
- Urge your child to listen carefully to directions. Practice following directions with activities at home. For instance, ask your child to follow printed directions to make a recipe, or give her a list of detailed directions and ask her to finish the tasks in a specific amount of time. Following directions is especially important when taking tests.
 - Visit your local library with your child as often as possible. Encourage her to find books that she is interested in reading, and take out books for yourself. Let your child see you reading, too, so she knows that reading is useful, enjoyable, and important.
 - Allow your child to use educational, reading-based computer software programs that reinforce reading skills and may help prepare her for working within time limits. Ask your child's teacher which programs are most appropriate for your child's abilities and needs. Often, software programs are available at the local library or through the school.

READING TESTS DON'T HAVE TO BE SCARY

No matter what your experience with school and reading tests, with the right preparation and outlook, your child's test-taking experiences will be positive. You can help prepare your child for reading tests by fol-

lowing some of the tips offered here or by asking for more information from your child's teacher or school.



Additional Resources From IRA

BOOKS

- *Families at School: A Handbook for Parents*, by Adele Thomas, Lynn Fazio, and Betty L. Stiefelmeyer (1999)
- *Family Literacy Connections in Schools and Communities*, edited by Lesley Mandel Morrow (1995)

PARENT BOOKLETS

- "Books Are Cool!" *Keeping Your Middle School Student Reading*
- *I Can Read and Write! How to Encourage Your School-Age Child's Literacy Development*

OTHER PARENT BROCHURES

(All are also available in Spanish)

- *Explore the Playground of Books: Tips for Parents of Beginning Readers*
- *Get Ready to Read! Tips for Parents of Young Children*
- *Library Safari: Tips for Parents of Young Readers and Explorers*
- *Make the Reading-Writing Connection: Tips for Parents of Young Learners*
- *Making the Most of Television: Tips for Parents of Young Viewers*
- *See the World on the Internet: Tips for Parents of Young Readers—and "Surfers"*
- *Summer Reading Adventure! Tips for Parents of Young Readers*
- *Understanding Your Child's Learning Differences*

Order these and other IRA publications by calling 800-336-READ, ext. 266. Or visit the Association's Online Bookstore, bookstore.reading.org.

This and other parent brochures may be purchased from the International Reading Association in quantities of 100, prepaid only. (Please contact the Association for pricing information.) Single copies are free upon request by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Requests from outside the U.S. should include an envelope, but postage is not required.

Single copies can be downloaded free for personal use through the Association's website:

www.reading.org/publications/brochures/brochures.html
(requires Adobe's Acrobat Reader).

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WHY ARE READING TESTS IMPORTANT?

A big part of your child's education is taking tests. Reading tests, whether formal or informal, measure which skills and strategies your child has mastered and which need more teaching. Some reading tests decide major things in your child's education, such as placement in remedial programs, promotion to the next grade, or even funding for the school itself. For these reasons, it is important for you and your child to take reading tests seriously.

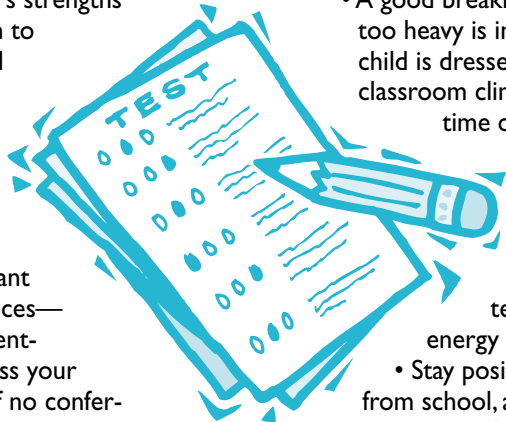
You can help your child to prepare for reading tests in a number of ways, not only just before the test, but also with everyday activities.

WHAT TYPES OF READING TESTS ARE THERE?

There are generally two types of reading tests given to students. Your child's teacher gives these tests periodically throughout the year to find out what students have retained. These tests can be anything from a brief true-false or multiple-choice test to a more detailed writing assignment. Many teachers find the information they gather from these tests to be useful in planning daily instruction.

There are also tests that are given to students to determine if they are meeting certain grade-level standards for reading and writing. These tests are more formal, often standardized. They are usually given to students periodically to measure student and school progress toward meeting specific standards or expectations. These tests also give teachers and reading specialists an idea of each child's strengths and weaknesses, and help them to determine which children need additional help with reading.

The results of many standardized tests include a report for parents, and some schools ask for individual parent-teacher conferences to discuss the results. It is important that you attend these conferences—and all regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences—to discuss your child's achievement or needs. If no conference is requested by the teacher, you may want to make an appointment anyway. Discussing test results with the teacher not only shows that you are interested in your child's education, but also will lead to better understanding between you, the teacher, and your child.



THE TEST IS NEXT WEEK . . . HOW CAN I PREPARE MY CHILD NOW?

There are a number of things that you can do to prepare your child for reading tests in days just before the test and on test day itself:

- Reduce anxiety by explaining the importance of tests, but develop a positive attitude and put the test in proper perspective. For example, tell your child, "Do the best you can, but it's OK if you don't score perfectly or even at the top of your class." Be a cheerleader. Let your child know that you believe in him and that as long as he tries his best on the test, you will not be angry about the results.
- Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep for the few days before the test. This is especially important the night before the test! A well-rested child is more alert, is ready to listen to directions, and is more focused on the test itself.
- A good breakfast that is nutritionally balanced but not too heavy is important on test day. Also, make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather and the classroom climate, and make sure he arrives at school on time on the day of the test. Hunger, discomfort because of clothing, and stress caused by lateness or rushing could take his attention off the test.
- Provide your child with a nutritional snack to eat during a break time in the test. This will relax him and provide an energy boost needed for concentration.
- Stay positive on test day. When your child gets home from school, ask how the test went, and offer encouragement and support, even if he doesn't think he did well. Keep the test in perspective, and remind him that what's most important is that he did his best.
- After the test, be aware of your child's test performance, and make an appointment with the teacher if you need help interpreting results.

IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO EVERY DAY TO PREPARE MY CHILD FOR READING TESTS?

It seems obvious that better readers do better on reading tests. But how do you help your child become a better reader? There are a number of things that you can do on a regular basis to help your child learn to read more effectively:

- Be involved. Talk to the teacher often to keep track of your child's progress. Find out what activities you can do at home to help her learning and test performance.
- Read lots of different things—books, magazines, newspapers, letters—with your child as often as possible. Ask questions about what you are reading, too. For example, when reading a story, ask about the characters and events, or ask how your child thinks it will end.
- Encourage your child to ask about words she doesn't understand. While she's reading, she could keep a notebook of these words to ask you or the teacher later. Encourage your child to look up new words in the dictionary, also. Ask her to use these words in regular conversation so she will get used to them.
- Make sure your child is doing her homework every night. If the teacher has not asked for you to sign a homework book each night, make sure your child

