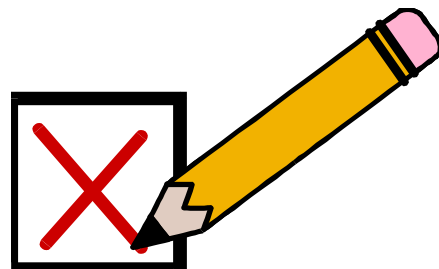


Being Test-Wise

Strategies for Success on Multiple Choice Tests



Premises and Background Information

...From Fountas and Pinnell (2001)

- Explicitly teaching a limited number of examples is ultimately more powerful and helpful than hours of drill on vague workbook examples.
- Too much drill undermines the time for more meaningful curriculum, which deprives student of vital opportunities to build basic reading and writing strategies,
- Education is much more than test preparation; you want to communicate this important understanding to your students.
- Parents will appreciate the test preparation you do, but you want them to understand that your curriculum is much richer and broader than teaching to the test.
- Create an ongoing curriculum to help students develop genuine reading and writing abilities that will provide a foundation for good test performance (as well as all the benefits of a literate life).

BE TEST SMART!

BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rest• Eat• Bring materials• Plan your time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pace yourself• Position your answer sheet• Select good thinking strategies• Answer all questions• Make thoughtful guesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use extra time to check your responses• Feel a sense of accomplishment

Right There Questions

The answer is in the text, usually easy to find.

Fact Questions:

Skim for key words, dates, locations

- Christopher Columbus landed in America on ...
- All of the following are facts about whales in captivity except ...

Vocabulary/Word Meaning Questions:

Look for synonyms, antonyms, definition clues, etc.

- Baby ducks are called ...
- The article says that “although the road was treacherous, there were no accidents.” *Treacherous* means about the same as ...

Explanation Questions:

Look for signal words like because, reason for, when, as a result of, causes of, etc.

- The girl decides to marry the prince because ...
- According to the article, frostbite occurs when...

Maps, Graphs, and other text visuals questions:

Look at graphs, pictures, charts, maps, etc.

- Which of the following items best fits in the empty box in the graphic organizer below?
- Using the timeline below, when was Bill Clinton elected president for the first time?
- According to the graph, the state with the highest population is ...



Think and Search Questions

The answer is in the text, but you need to put together different parts to find it.

Putting it Together Questions:

- How are Charlotte and Wilbur alike?
- You can tell from the story that Zippy the kitten is probably what color...

Sequence Questions:

- Which of the following come last in time order?

Explanation Questions:

Look for signal words like because, reason for, when, as a result of, causes of, etc.

- Which of the following statements provides relevant information supporting the claim that honesty is the best policy?
- Why haven't scientists studied the giant pandas in their natural home?

Cause/Effect Questions:

- Grandfather lets the children know he loves them when ...
- How did Amelia prepare for the competition?

Topic/Main Idea Questions:

- Another good title for this story would be ...
- The article is mostly about ...
- What do you think is the most important idea the author wants you to know about Thomas Jefferson?



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Office of English Language Arts

Author and Me

Questions

The answer is not in the story. You need to think about what you already know, what the author tells you in the text, and how it fits together.

Inferences About Characters/Events Questions:

- What is the real reason that Tyler behaves so badly?
- Which detail helps you to infer that Marcus is really quite brave?
- How is an archaeologist most like a detective?

Drawing Conclusion About Characters/Events Questions:

- The author of this article most likely believes
- What conclusion can you draw based on this selection?
- From this article, which statement about Native Americans is probably true?

Questions About Theme:

- From this story we can learn that ...
- The author probably wants us to understand that ...

Questions About Author's Purpose:

- The author wrote this article to...

Questions About Author's Craft:

- The author probably repeated the phrase “and the violent wind howled” to make you feel ...
- Which of the following organization structures does the author of *Animals of the Rainforest* use to help his readers understand the information he presents?

Questions That Ask the Reader to Evaluate or Make a Judgment:

- We can tell that this story is true because



“Ate” Tips for the Test Taker
Multiple Choice tests will assess your ability to
solve problems and think critically.

Regulate - Watch your time and pace yourself. If you have 40 minutes to answer 28 questions, know that after 20 minutes you should be half way through, that is, completing number 14. Do not spend too much time on any one question. Plan to go back if you have time.

Indicate - Indicate your answers carefully on your answer sheet. Make certain that your answer sheet lines up and that your answers correspond correctly.

Formulate -As you read the question, think of the answer you might give if you didn't have any choices. If you find your answer among the choices, it is likely to be the correct response.

Complicate-Watch for words and phrases such as: *always, never, only, all of the above, and not true* because they can be confusing.

Eliminate -When you are not sure of an answer, rule out silly or wrong answers and guess among the ones that are left.

Evaluate -When you are done, go back over your work and check for accuracy, review questions for which you were uncertain, and make sure that all questions have been answered.

Mini-Lessons for Orienting Students to Tests

- **Format of Test** - Distribute texts (phone book, play, newspaper, etc.) in a variety of genres for students to notice the **format** and identify how the format helps them to read and understand the texts. Then distribute a test for students to study its format and begin to determine ways to make that knowledge help them be successful.
- **Language/Tone of Test** - Students examine tests, listing unfamiliar words they find in the questions. Students share these words to discuss with the teacher how these unfamiliar words are often just very formal English versions of words they already know and understand. (e.g., theme is really the main message).
- **"Kidwatching"- Identifying Strategy Usage** - After or during a practice test, interview students to determine their thinking and use their comments to help identify strategies that should be abandoned or new ones that would be more helpful. Ask: "Can you explain why you *did not* choose these other answers? Do you think this is a confusing question? or I noticed you doing ... why?" Responses to questions reveal students' use or non-use of strategies and give you ideas for supporting them.
- **Eliminating Choices** - Show a short clip from a multiple-choice quiz show such as *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* where the contestant discusses the choices and rationalizes why possible responses are the answer or not. Have students describe what the contestant is thinking. Guide this discussion to help them understand that "no choice" is not an option; educated guesses are appropriate. You can even have fun with this by suggesting that "phone a friend" could be going back to the text to find an answer and "50-50" is making a guess after narrowing the choices down to two choices.

- **Understanding Questions** - Have students paraphrase test questions. List the paraphrased versions they have generated under the questions on chart paper. Discuss the paraphrased versions with students and help them decide which ones will help them answer the questions and which will lead them astray.
- **Confusing Words** - Have students read through test questions and highlight words such as: *never* and *always*. Discuss with students why they are misleading.
- **Educated Guessing** - Model for students by thinking aloud how to use what they already know to approach a challenging question for which they do not know an answer.
- **First Responses** - During a short practice test, students share their first responses and discuss them, noticing how the test makers may have mislead them.

Tips for Watching Test-Takers in Action

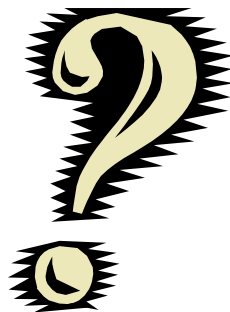
Often students perform well each day in the classroom, yet seem to fall apart for assessments. For them and all students, teachers can gain insight to better support them in performing better on assessments becoming “kidwatchers.”

Environment <i>Creating the conditions that each child needs to be successful</i>	Is the student’s work station orderly? Is there enough space for this particular student? Is the space conducive to the student’s dominant writing hand? Is the lighting appropriate for this student’s working style? Does the location of the work station have any adverse effects on student performance?
Behaviors and Self-Efficacy <i>Empowering students to use the skills necessary to be successful</i>	Does the student exhibit behaviors such as nail biting, tapping, pencil chewing, finger pointing, etc.? When does the child concentrate fully and when does the child lose focus? What seems to make the student restless or troubled? What do eye movements or facial expressions indicate? What comments does the student make? Does the student’s level of confidence promote stamina and endurance?
Test Approaches <i>Equipping students with strategies necessary to be successful</i>	What does the student do to get started? Is there evidence of impulsivity, skipping around, disorganization, perseveration, etc.? Is the student’s pace appropriate? What strategies are evident as the student works through the test (clarifying questions, highlighting, marginal notes, pre-reading questions, etc.)? What does the student do upon completion?

Gathering Information from Students

In addition to observations or “kidwatching” of students’ behaviors and approaches to test taking, it is sometimes necessary to conduct in-depth interviews with individual students to identify strategy use, reasoning or misconceptions. Interviews can be conducted during or after a practice test opportunity. Questions should be directly connected to your observations. If, as a result of your observations, you have a hunch or theory, ask questions of students to confirm/disprove your thinking. The following are possible questions you could use to guide your interviews:

- Why did/didn't you choose this answer? And why/why not this one?
- What was your thinking as you worked through this question?
- Tell me all the thinking you went through before you decided on this answer.
- I noticed you doing _____. Why? Why did you look back at the text/ stop here/ start biting your pencil/ skip this question/roll your eyes/ start here/spend a lot of time on this question/ speed through this section/etc.
- What are you doing/thinking/ where are you looking right now?
- Do you know what this word means? Is all the print on this page distracting to you? Is this question confusing you?

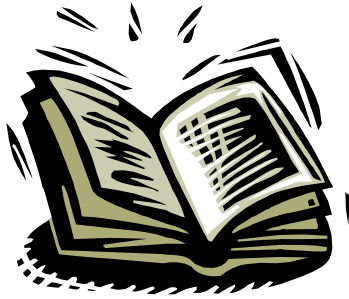


Common Traps Children Encounter

- Losing ones place in the passage when pausing to circle an answer or mark notes
- Skipping over important directions
- Being inattentive to graphics and pictures
- Responding to test passages in the same way as to novels read for pleasure (not necessarily helpful in testing situations which requires its own mindset)
- Progressing out of order when moving from booklet to bubble sheet causing disorientation
- Relying on memory for details in the passage and never checking back with the passage to confirm
- Over-relying on background knowledge (schema) to answer questions
- Consuming too much time to confirm answers in passages
- Becoming overwhelmed by too much text or too little print
- Jumping from passage to passage so quickly that content becomes mixed or confused
- Being overly methodical or perfectionistic

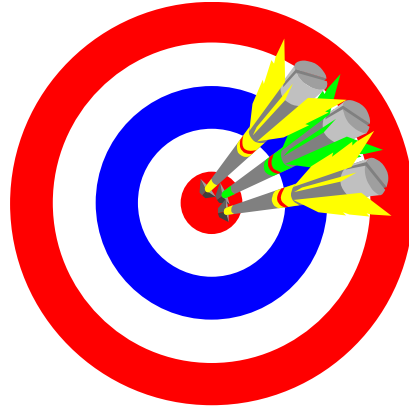


Identify the Main Idea



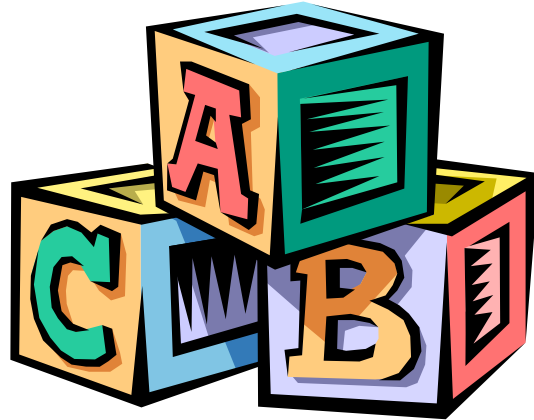
- Determine what the selection is *mostly* about
- Imagine an appropriate title for the reading selection

Locate Specific Details



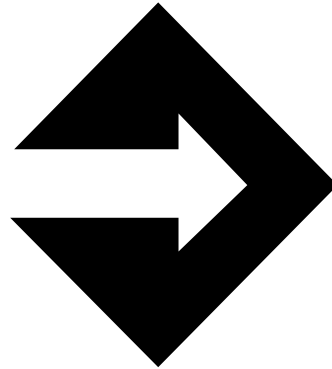
- Skim quickly over parts to see what the selection is about
 - title*
 - author*
 - introduction*
 - illustrations*
 - captions*
 - key words*
 - conclusion*
- Scan the question for a key word or phrase
- Scan the selection until you find that key word or phrase
- Stop and read closely, looking for the answer to the question

Identify Sequences



- Events in a selection will *usually* appear in sequential order
- Look for signal words like: *first, next, then, before, after, and finally* that tell you when an event has taken place
- Follow any dates in the reading selection that tell you the chronological order in which events happened

Identify Cause and Effect



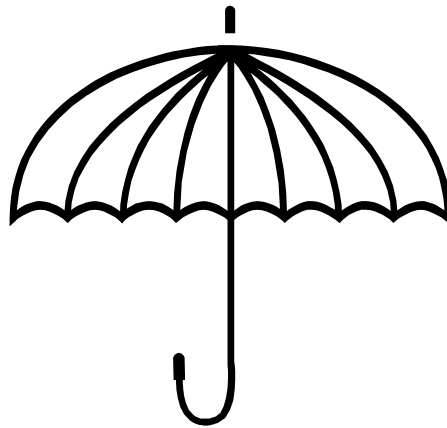
- One event causes another event to happen
- The first event is the cause, and the second event is the effect
- Look for key words such as:
because, cause, therefore, result, consequence, effect, and so
- Look for question dealing with one event making another event happen

Use Context Clues



- Figure out the meaning of an unknown word by looking at the words (clues) around it
- Use the hints in the text to help you figure out an unknown word

Identify Themes



- Look for the lesson that the reading selection teaches
- Identify the main character who learns the lesson in the selection

Eliminate Poor Choices



- Identify and eliminate answers that are obviously incorrect
- Choose the best of the remaining answers