

Studying & Test-Taking 101

Your tween can do her best on test day by studying and being prepared. Share these techniques with her so she learns and remembers the material—and feels confident on test day.

Create a study plan

A study plan is a great way for your middle schooler to get organized—and to make tasks seem more manageable. To allow enough time for review, she can prepare her plan as soon as a test is announced. Here's how:

■ **Pay attention in class.** Your child should listen carefully when the teacher states which sections or chapters an exam will cover. That way, she'll know what to focus on when she studies.

■ **List review items.** Creating a list of what to study helps your middle grader stay on track. *Example:* Chapter 4 notes, vocabulary words, lab results. As she reviews each item, she could mark it off—giving her a sense of accomplishment and keeping her motivated.



■ **Gather supplies.** Have your tween pull out materials she needs for studying. She might gather handouts, graded homework, quizzes, notes, and textbooks.

■ **Be flexible.** Encourage her to update her study plan as she goes. If she needs to review a difficult chapter a second time, she can work it in before the test date.

Develop study techniques

Your middle grader can get the most out of the time he spends studying by using these proven strategies:

■ **Make information easy to find.** Your child might write topics (“Rules for commas,” “Metric conversions”) on sticky notes



and use them to mark information in his textbook or notebook. Or he could condense key information into a study guide.

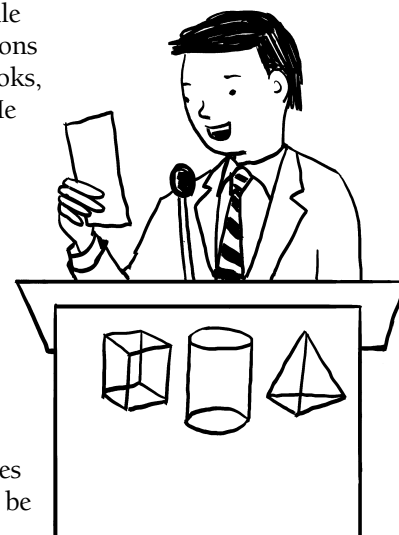
■ **Combine study methods.** Encourage your tween to learn information in more than one way. For example, if he's studying the solar system, he could read his notes first and then make a model with marbles. Afterward, he can reinforce both activities by creating flash cards with vocabulary terms like *galaxy* and *asteroid*.

■ **Review old assignments and quizzes.** Reading through answers he got right reinforces the information in his memory. Correcting wrong answers helps him avoid repeating mistakes.

■ **Quiz yourself.** Your middle grader can make up questions using his notes and textbooks, then try to answer them. He could also answer practice questions or problems at the end of textbook chapters.

■ **Clear up confusion.**

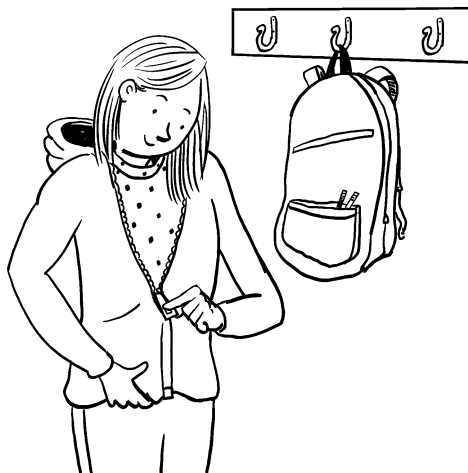
If your middle schooler doesn't understand something, encourage him to ask for extra help before or after school or during a study period. Teachers' aides or other students may also be available for tutoring.



Prevent exam anxiety

Because tests often carry so much weight, many students feel nervous about them. Kids might have trouble concentrating, forget what they know, or even experience a rapid heartbeat, upset stomach, or sweaty hands at test time. Share these tips to help your child handle anxiety at test time:

- **Visualize doing well.** Your tween might imagine confidently tackling test questions and receiving a good grade. Seeing himself this way can boost his confidence and inspire him to keep preparing even when he doesn't feel like it.
- **Focus on yourself.** If one of your middle grader's friends talks about how hard the test will be, your child could remind himself of what *he's* doing to get ready. Or if another student took the test earlier in the day and says it was tough, your middle schooler should keep in mind that it may not be hard for him—because he is so prepared!
- **Limit commitments.** A few days before a big test probably isn't the best time to sign up for a new activity. Keeping commitments under control will help your child stay focused and stick to a study schedule.



Prepare in advance

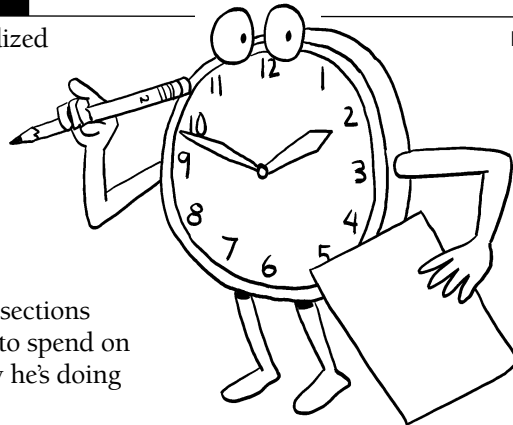
Getting organized the night before a test will make your middle grader feel calm. Here are ways to make sure test day gets off to a good start:

- **Plan breakfast.** It's important for your child to eat a healthy breakfast on test day (and every day). To save time in the morning, talk about what she wants to eat for breakfast before she goes to bed. Remind her that a well-balanced breakfast, such as eggs, toast, and a banana, or oatmeal or cereal with berries, will help her stay alert and focused.
- **Pack supplies.** She should ask the teacher what she's allowed to have on hand and make sure she has everything ready—sharpened pencils, erasers, calculator with working batteries, scrap paper.
- **Decide what to wear.** Choosing layered clothing (like a T-shirt under a zippered sweatshirt) will allow your tween to add or remove layers if she gets hot or cold during a test.

Taking standardized tests

Help your child prepare for standardized tests with strategies like these:

- Read the instructions word for word. Paying careful attention to directions will help your middle grader complete problems or answer questions correctly the first time so she won't have to redo them.
- Skim the test. He can see how many sections there are and estimate how much time to spend on each. As he works, he could check how he's doing against the clock.



- Check to make sure answers are written on the correct line or typed into the right section. If your tween skips a question on a paper-and-pencil test, she should be sure to skip that line on the answer sheet, too.
- Use all the available time. There are no extra points for turning a test in early. Your child should use any time he has left to go back over his answers or fill in answers to questions he skipped.

Middle Years