

Is My Child A Bad Test Taker?

The Question: “My child gets A’s on their homework or quizzes, is confident they know the material, but then does poorly on tests. Is he or she just a bad test taker?”

The Answer: Possibly to a degree, but it is likely that the problem has more to do with preparing for tests than taking them.

Good Test Takers

There are some skills that do make some kids better at taking tests than others: rote memory, attention and strategic test taking. Attention and memory are skills that can be developed, but as cognitive skills they are harder to improve. Strategic test taking is something that most students can improve right away.

Strategic Test Takers

Strategic test taking means thinking not just about the information that is being asked about, but thinking about how the test is structured, the way in which the questions are being asked, what might the “trick” be for a question, and what the teacher thinks is important.

Preparation is More Important than Test Taking

In reality, doing well on a test is far more about preparation than test taking. So what can a student do to prepare for a test?

- Know the Test
- Study
- Develop Understanding
- Maintain Your Knowledge

Know the Test

Too many students take the time to find out what will be covered, what type of questions will be asked, or how best to prepare. These are things that every student should find out before preparing for the test, so that they know what and how to study.

- What is covered
- Test Structure
- How Best to Prepare

Study - More Than Just Doing Homework

A lot of students think “studying” means doing all of their assignments and review sheets. They do not realize that studying involves independently figuring out what material they need to know and taking the time to learn it, even if that has not been assigned or outlined.

Understand Completely

There are many stages of understanding and each stage builds upon the last.

Levels of Understanding

Understanding can be broken into the following 5 levels: recognizing, remembering, repeating, understanding and utilizing.

- 1. Recognizing**– Follow when the teacher does it
- 2. Remembering**– Remember what the teacher did
- 3. Repeating** – Do what the teacher
- 4. Understanding** – knowing why each step in a process is taken.
- 5. Utilization** – using the process to solve types of problems

Students often think they “understand” their material just because they reach recognition or Remembering. That’s plenty for homework. Repetition is enough for quizzes. But when it comes to a test students need to get to Understanding and Utilization to do well since the questions tend to be more complicated and in depth.

Maintain Your Knowledge

Simply put, just because you knew it last week, doesn’t mean you still know it. Everyone must review their material in order to keep up to date with their knowledge.

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