

Preparing your child for testing

Types of tests

Testing is used in schools for two main purposes. One is to find out how well an individual student is learning in the classroom. For instance, teachers can test how well a child is responding to reading instruction by using assessments that measure specific skills necessary for fluent reading.

The other purpose is to find out how well the school is meeting local and national benchmarks for student achievement. For this purpose schools use standardized tests, usually administered in the spring.

How to help

Take a deep breath. Step away from the flashcards. As a parent, the most important way you can help your child do well on tests is to read with your child regularly, talk with her about her experiences, and provide a quiet work space at home.

When well-meaning parents focus too much on test results, they put undue pressure on young children. For kids who struggle with attention or memorization tasks, testing can be extremely stressful because it requires students to draw entirely on these skills.

To help prepare for routine classroom assessments:

- Provide a variety of books, children's magazines, and enriching experiences to spark your child's curiosity and build vocabulary
- Make sure your child gets time and space for homework
- Make sure your child gets enough rest and a well-balanced diet
- Consult your child's teacher to find out if there are specific skills you can practice at home

To help prepare for standardized tests:

- Ask the teacher for the testing schedule and a practice test so that you can familiarize your child with the format ahead of time so he knows what to expect
- Respond to any concerns your child has with encouragement and support. Emphasize that there are lots of ways to express what you know, and that these tests are just one measure

Interpreting test scores

Ask the teacher to share the results of standardized testing to see if your child's performance on the test is consistent with his or her performance in the classroom. Meet with the teacher about any concerns you have. If you are interested, you can also ask how the school compares to other schools in the district, state, and across the country.

**For more information about testing, visit:
www.readingrockets.org/article/c68**

