



Literacy Connects

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Test Taking Tips for Reading Exams

Although there is no substitute for effective content and process instruction, teaching test preparation strategies will increase students' ability to perform on standardized assessments. Having students practice with test formats, providing immediate feedback, and discussing "how to" approach these assessments will help lessen test anxiety and increase their motivation to do well. Following are a few friendly tips to help with any type of reading comprehension exam:

- Support responses to constructed response items with specific and sufficient details from the passage. This means the answer is IN the passage and there should be more than one, preferably three, separate details from the passage included in the answer.
- Teach the vocabulary used in the standards. Do not substitute other words to make the vocabulary easier. CRTs use the language of the standards, so students must be familiar with the vocabulary contained there. Also, teach key words like *list, summarize, analyze, compare, etc.*
- Choose the BEST answer for each question. Read all the answer choices and eliminate those you know to be incorrect. If any PART of the answer is wrong, the whole item is wrong. Part of an incorrect answer is often correct, but may not be complete enough to answer the question.
- Understand exactly what the question is asking and choose the response that answers that question only. NEVER choose an answer just because it is in the passage; it MUST ALWAYS answer the corresponding question. It often helps to put the question in your own words or circle key words, such as *not, least, cause, effect, first, last, etc.*
- When faced with a long reading passage and several corresponding questions, read the questions before reading the passage. This will help give focus and purpose to the reading. The first reading should be a careful reading, noting answers to questions and other important details. Use skimming strategies to go back and search for answers to specific questions.
- Proceed carefully when answering questions containing the words NOT or EXCEPT. You should be able to answer three of the choices with a YES based on the passage. The one choice that can be answered with a NO is the correct answer.
- For main idea questions, re-read the first and last sentences. When you finish the passage, try to sum it up in one sentence. This should be close to the main idea.
- For time and sequence questions, don't always expect events to be given in order. Watch for time and sequence key words: *first, last, then, finally, before, etc.*
- For vocabulary questions, use context clues to help define words: the sentence containing the word; the sentence right before and the sentence right after the word.
- For fact and opinion questions, statements that contain words like good, bad or great that show personal value will be opinions. Facts can always be checked or verified to be either true or false. With a fact, there can be no other point of view.

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