

EDU GUIDE

Becoming a better TEST TAKER

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We have all encountered that one person in school—the first to raise their hand, comprehend complex material effortlessly, and be a smart person in general until the graded tests come back.

The reason behind the phenomenon of not being a good test-taker extends beyond mere familiarity with the subject matter—it delves into the psychological intricacies of test-taking. From debilitating anxiety to unfamiliarity with exam formats, several factors can influence one's performance. Test-taking is multifaceted, and becoming a better test-taker means addressing issues such as test anxiety and understanding one's own learning processes.

Taking a test is not just a measure of how much we know or how much we've studied, it's an evaluation of how well we can apply that knowledge under pressure, involving familiarity with the specific requirements of different exams and the ability to adapt strategies accordingly.

Anxiety, a common adversary during exams, can paralyse even the most knowledgeable students. Some freeze

up, unable to organise their thoughts coherently, leading to subpar performance. This anxiety can be triggered by various factors, such as fear of failure, time constraints, or the intensity of the testing environment.

Language barriers further complicate the test-taking process. Students taking exams in a language that is not their first may struggle to articulate their thoughts accurately. This challenge requires a dual effort—improving language proficiency and developing test-taking strategies that accommodate linguistic nuances. A comprehensive approach involves not only studying the subject matter but also honing language skills to ensure effective communication during exams.

Learning disabilities, on the other hand, pose unique challenges. For instance, individuals with dyslexia may have a profound understanding of the material but struggle to translate their ideas into written form efficiently as they think in more than one dimension, making essay-based exams particularly daunting. According to CNLD Testing & Therapy, learning disabilities generally have no cure, but early intervention and psychotherapy can lessen their effects.

To overcome these hurdles, it's crucial to recognise one's learning style and implement strategies that accommodate visual thinking, allowing for a more seamless expression of what we've learnt.

Understanding the nuances of exam formats is another critical aspect often overlooked by students. Unfamiliarity with the structure of a test, particularly ones like the SAT, can lead to inefficient techniques, such as inadequate time allocation for each question.

A bad day or disrupted sleep patterns can significantly impact performance. Recognising the influence of external factors on test day is essential for

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effective preparation. Developing consistent sleep patterns, adopting stress management techniques, and maintaining overall well-being can contribute to a more stable and focused mind during exams.

To become a better test-taker, it's crucial to analyse past performances critically. Deconstructing what went wrong and understanding the root causes of mistakes is the first step toward improvement. Seeking feedback from teachers, evaluating exam preparation methods, and assessing study habits provide valuable insights. This introspective process involves identifying areas that didn't work, acknowledging successful strategies, and pinpointing potential improvements.

Tackling exam questions strategically is also very important. Understanding the specificity of errors, refining exam preparation techniques, and adapting study habits based on feedback contribute to holistic improvement. The process is not easy by any means and requires a lot of humility and the willingness to reassess one's approach to studying and test-taking continually.

It is also essential to recognize that the standardised tests we sit for were designed a long time ago, meaning that they frequently fall short of evaluating what they purport to measure. They rarely ever accommodate the diverse learning needs and paces of individual students. So, while test-taking skills are worthwhile, they should never be a determinant of one's self-worth.

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