



Parent Resources
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**THINGS EVERY
PARENT SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT
STATE TESTING**

PLUS

Easy ways to prepare, so skills are strong and your child isn't stressed.

Ah, There's Nothing Like a Big, Standardized Test ...

... To turn even the best test takers into a hot mess!

Just thinking about the tick, tick, tick of the clock for a timed test can produce clammy hands.

Pounding hearts.

Roller-coaster queasiness that won't go away.

And we're talking about you ... Imagine how your child feels!

If your child has the state test coming up, take heart:

You're doing the right thing to get up-to-speed

In the pages to come, you've got the information at your fingertips to:

- Know exactly what the state test means for your child.
- Take control of preparation, so you eliminate surprises on test day.
- Build your child's confidence and lower the test-taking anxiety that can creep its way into homework and family time.
- Ensure your child has a really solid foundation of skills for his or her grade level.
(Because that's what really matters, right?)

You've got this!

THE KEY THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT STATE TESTING

#1: The purpose of the state testing

The purpose of state testing is to determine whether your child has mastered the skills that he or she should know for a specific grade level.

Think of the skills that your child is learning in school as building blocks. Each year, the skills build on each other. In order to add skills in the next grade, your child needs a solid foundation in the current grade's skills first.

State testing is testing the sturdiness of that building block.

It's important to understand that your state test isn't testing actual curriculum or material from textbooks, worksheets, homework or software.

Your state test
has it's own name!

You may hear it called:

- A standards test
- An assessment of academic readiness
- A proficiency exam
- Something else

To keep it simple, we'll call it a "state test."

#2: Testing "grade-level skills"

Your state is testing whether your child understands and can use the skills needed for his or her grade level.

Let's say you have a 3rd grader ...

And your state says that a 3rd grader should have the following language arts skill:

"The ability to describe characters in a story (such as their traits, motivations or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events"

This is a fancy way of saying your child should have basic reading comprehension skills.

If your child reads a chapter book, can he or she draw basic conclusions about the characters and how the characters influence what's happening in the story?

To evaluate this skill on a state test, your child may be asked to read a one-page narrative. Then, your child may get a question that asks:

"According to this narrative, which statement best describes Simon, the main character?"

You'll notice your child isn't being tested on whether he or she read a specific chapter book before the test.

#3: How the test affects your child in school (why the test is important)

State tests are intended to objectively:

- Evaluate whether your child on track for his or her grade level
- Hold schools accountable for student performance

As a parent, you should know that a state test **does NOT affect your child's grades** in school.

Depending on the state where you live, though, it may affect whether your child can move to the next grade level or graduate from school.

It also can affect how your child is taught in school and where your child may be placed within a class.

State tests give schools and school districts information that is intended to help them:

- Improve how students are taught
- Coach teachers
- Provide additional support for students

Every day, teachers are assessing whether your child understands skills, so they can offer the right support. The test is intended to give them an objective measure of how your child is doing.

#4: Who has to take the test

Your child has to take the test ... if your child is in public school in the United States. It's a requirement of the Every Student Succeeds Act (formerly the No Child Left Behind Act).

#5: Grade levels that are tested

Your child will be tested against state standards:

- In grades 3-8
- Once in high school

#6: Kids who are homeschooled

Generally, homeschooled children do not have to take a state test.

However, if you homeschool your child and you **want** to know how your child is doing, you can bring your child in for a Sylvan Insight™ Assessment.

You'll learn exactly how your child is doing compared to grade level standards. You'll find out whether your child is on track and which skills may need extra attention.

#7: When state tests are given

Depending on where you live, the state test is usually given in March or April, but it can take place as late as May and June.

Timing varies by state.

#8: The test format

Typically, your child will be asked to answer different types of questions:

- Multiple-choice questions
- Short written responses
- A longer essay (in some states)

As of early 2019, 50% of U.S. states offer their tests in a digital format, such as on a computer.

For the states that still administer the tests with a paper and pencil, they use “bubble sheets.”

(Do you remember those tests where you had to fill in circles to answer questions, and you had row after row of circles? Those are bubble sheets.)

#9: Subjects that are tested

Every state will test your child’s math and reading skills. Most states also will evaluate writing skills.

As for other subjects?

It varies widely.

Some states test science and social studies. Some test a student’s knowledge of the state’s history. Some test civics. Some states might have a writing test, but only for certain grade levels.

#10: The role of the ACT or SAT

You may be wondering, does the ACT or SAT count as our state test for high school students?

It depends on your state.

For a long time, only a few states in the South and in the Midwest used the ACT as their high school state test.

Now, there’s a movement **in many states** to use the SAT or the ACT as the high school state test.

States do this for a couple reasons:

- It gives them an independent test of college readiness.
- It gives your teen a way to take the SAT or ACT for free.

To find out whether the SAT or ACT counts as your state test, visit your state’s Department of Education website.

#11: How to prepare for state testing

Should you be doing anything to get your child ready? Yes! Turn to the next article for easy tips and strategies to prepare.



EASY TIPS AND STRATEGIES

to Prepare for the State Testing

... so your child's test day is stress-free

Your state test is just the beginning of many standardized tests to come:

- The ACT or SAT
- Advancement Placement (AP) exams
- ACCUPLACER tests for community colleges or technical schools
- The ASVAB exam for certain military branches
- Exams to get into business or medical school
- Exams to get certified in certain trades
- Exams to earn or maintain professional licenses

These tests can play an important role in your child's future!

That's why it's **AWESOME** you're being proactive now, so you can help your child take on standardized tests with confidence.

Here are ways to help your child prepare for the state test, so your child knows what to expect, feels more confident, and does his or her best on test day.

#1: Make sure your child has a firm foundation in the skills that will be assessed

This is true for any standardized test.

For state testing in particular, you want to make sure your child has the skills to be successful and happy in school.

Sounds great, you think, but what's the best way to make sure my child's skills are on track?

To learn where your child is meeting skill standards and where your child may be struggling:

- Look at your child's report card and any teacher comments.
- Attend all parent/teacher conferences to get each teacher's perceptions, especially for reading and math.
- Make sure you have open communication with your child's teacher(s).
- Ask your child's teacher(s) what you can do at home. Most teachers will have recommendations.

If you don't have a clear picture of whether your child's skills are on track, you're always welcome to bring your child into Sylvan for a Sylvan Insight™ Assessment.

You'll learn **exactly** how our child is doing compared to grade level and get unique insights into your child's strengths and skill gaps.

#2: Ask your child's teacher(s) or principal how the school prepares kids for your state test

Usually, schools will proactively send out information about how they prepare kids for their state test.

You'll most likely see this information **near the start of the school year**.

But you don't have to wait for information to come to you. You can:

- Go to a PTA meeting and talk to the principal.
- Ask your child's math and reading teachers at parent-teacher conferences. (The "get to know you" conference at the start of the year is the perfect time for this conversation.)

Test preparation varies from school to school.

Oftentimes, schools start to prepare students a few months before the test, so kids know what to expect and feel less nervous on test day.

To prepare, schools may:

- Start giving kids homework questions in a standardized test format.
- Give kids a practice test to get familiar with what they'll encounter on test day, so they'll feel more confident.
- Have students spend time doing activities on a computer using the testing program or similar software. That way, they'll be more familiar with how to do things on test day.
- Offer after-school practice and preparation.

#3: Proactively help with preparation

You want your child to learn essential skills, so he or she can confidently advance through school. Not to mention, you don't want your child to feel any unnecessary anxiety!

That's why it's important to help your child master skills and prepare for the testing format.

Here are some practical ways you can do that. If your child:

- Struggles with any **skills**, make sure your child is getting proactive help and/or extra practice.
- Is working on a **homework assignment that has multiple-choice questions**, make sure he or she understands the answer format.
- Is working on **homework with written responses**, make sure your child can write out complete sentences (as may be expected on the state test).
- Gets stressed out when **taking tests**, seek out programs that can build your child's confidence with test taking. (Sylvan offers several programs to help your child become a more confident test taker, including a dedicated program for your state test.)

#4: Reassure your child to relieve his or her fears

Standardized tests can give some children (and adults) a lot of anxiety!

Remind your child that the state test is nothing to be afraid of.

Explain that your state test is designed to help your child's school determine who may need additional help.

For younger kids, make sure your child understands that this test doesn't affect his or her grades.

There is one piece of information we don't recommend sharing before your state test ...

In some states, the state test is used to determine whether your child can move to the next grade level or graduate from high school. (However, you probably already know whether your child is at-risk for being held back.)

Sharing this information with your child can be counter-productive, giving your child extra pressure and stress.

#5: Seek out test preparation programs to help your child feel more prepared and less anxious

For many kids, the "fear of the unknown" is a big source of stress.

To help ease your child's fears, make sure your child:

1. Is as familiar as possible with what the test looks like
2. Has had enough practice with the test

If you can't do this through your school, Sylvan offers a **State Test Prep Program**. (It's best to start it 8-12 weeks before a test, but any amount of prep can help.)

Sylvan's program helps kids:

- Target and improve the skills that need the most help. (You'll see a positive impact in class too!)
- Get more confident with tests using special strategies and through hands-on practice.
- Keep anxiety down and build confidence up.
- Be more successful on test day and well beyond.

You'll not only help your child get familiar with the testing format, but your child will hone essential skills for his or her grade level.

You'll see a ripple effect in school: higher scores, more hands up in class, even greater confidence on homework.

#6: Rest up and eat well heading into the test

Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep on the night before the test. On the morning of the exam, give your child a good breakfast.

Does This Sound Familiar?

You can find tons of **advice on parenting** on the internet, but finding **education tips** you can trust to **work**? It's hit or miss.

Stop searching!

You can find **FREE** tips like the ones in this download in one, central place ... **Sylvan Nation!**

Sylvan Nation is a **free education resource** for all parents, grandparents and guardians. (You don't have to be a Sylvan family to use it.)

On the Sylvan Nation website, you'll get **practical tips and tools for school** — articles, videos, activities, worksheets — so you can help your child take on each day with confidence.

And yes, all this educational goodness is **FREE**.

Earn rewards while you help your child ... like exclusive Sylvan discounts

You'll get points for every activity you enjoy on **Sylvan Nation**.

For example, you'll earn points for checking out tips to improve your child's study habits or for watching a short video describing a fun STEM activity.

And your points lead to rewards, like **exclusive deals** on Sylvan programs, gift cards to 200+ retailers and a lot more.

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