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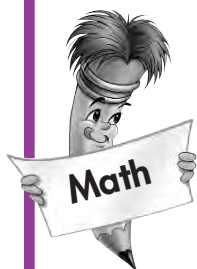
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Introduction

Testing is a big part of education today, and this workbook is designed to help students become better prepared to succeed at taking standardized and proficiency tests. This workbook contains skills and strategies that can be used in any kind of testing situation. Even if students don't have to take standardized tests, they will still benefit from studying the skills and strategies in this workbook.

Standardized Tests

Standardized tests get their name because they are administered in the exact same way to hundreds of thousands of students across the country. They are also referred to as *norm-referenced tests*. Norms give educators a common standard of measurement of students' skills and abilities across the country. Students are ranked according to their test scores and then assigned a percentile ranking. This ranking tells what percent of all students scored better or worse than the norm.

Proficiency Tests

Many states develop their own statewide proficiency tests. Proficiency tests are also known as *criterion-referenced tests*. This means that the test is based on a list of standards and skills (criteria). States develop standards for what students should know at each grade level. The proficiency test evaluates how well students have mastered these standards.

Although both tests may look similar, they measure different things. A proficiency test measures a student's mastery of set standards. A standardized test compares a student's achievement to others who took the same test across the country.

Many tests were reviewed in developing the material for this workbook. They include the following:

- **California Achievement Tests (CAT)**
- **Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS)**
- **TerraNova**
- **Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)**
- **Metropolitan Achievement Tests (MAT)**
- **Stanford Achievement Tests (SAT)**
- **Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)**

It is important to recognize that all national standardized achievement tests work essentially the same way. They ask multiple-choice questions, have specific time limits, and compare your child's results to national averages. The goal of this test-prep series is to teach **test-taking strategies** so that no matter which test your child is required to take, he or she will be successful.

Introduction

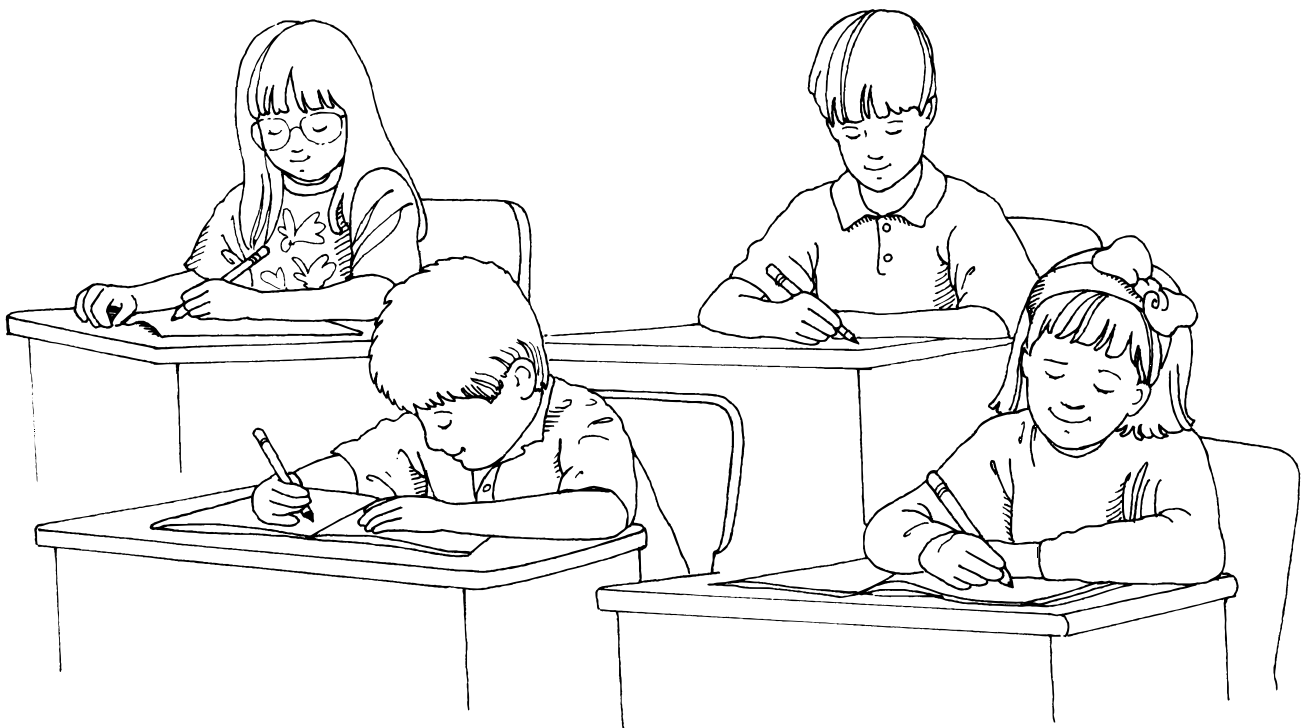
Preparing for Tests

The more students are prepared for taking standardized and proficiency tests, the better they will do on those tests. A student who understands the skills commonly measured and who practices test-taking strategies will be more likely to be a successful test-taker. The more the student knows and knows what to expect, the more comfortable he or she will be in actual test-taking situations.

Standardized and proficiency testing is used to:

- evaluate students' progress, strengths, and weaknesses.
- show how each student's school achievement compares with other students on a local and nationwide level (standardized).
- show an individual student's achievement of set standards (proficiency).
- select students for remedial or achievement programs.
- tell educators whether school systems are succeeding.
- evaluate the success of school programs.
- help educators develop programs to suit their students' specific needs.

Standardized tests are only one measure of student achievement, however. Teachers use many other methods to gain insights into each student's skills, abilities, and knowledge. They evaluate students through day-to-day observation, evaluation, and assessment.



Introduction

How Can Parents Help Children Succeed at Standardized Testing?

The following list includes suggestions on how to help prepare children to do their best on standardized tests:

Tips for Parents

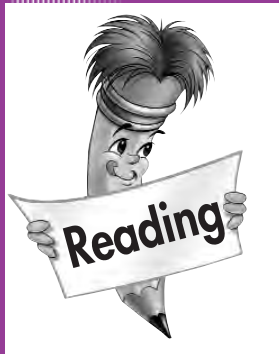
- Monitor your child's progress.
- Get to know your child's teacher; find out what he or she thinks you can do to best help your child at home.
- Be informed about your state's testing requirements.
- Motivate your child to prepare.
- Help your child structure a quiet place and time away from distractions to do homework.
- Read aloud to your child.
- Find learning experiences in everyday life, making change, reading signs, preparing food, walking outside.
- Make sure your child is getting the sleep and nutrition he or she needs to succeed.
- Always nurture your child's curiosity and desire to learn.
- Encourage your child to learn about computers and technology.
- Encourage your child to take tests seriously, but to value learning and giving one's best efforts.
- Notice academic efforts your child is making and support and acknowledge what you see.

Where Can I Learn More About Testing?

ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation
209 O'Boyle Hall
The Catholic University of America
Washington, DC 20064
(202) 319-5120
<http://ericae.net/>

National Center for Fair and Open Testing, Inc. (FairTest)
342 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139
<http://www.fairtest.org/>

Introduction to Reading



Reading is an important part of life and one of the most vital skills required for success on standardized and proficiency tests as well as in many careers. The best way for children to improve reading skills is to become avid readers. The most successful readers read for pleasure. They tend to read often, with others and alone. They read many different types of materials as a natural habit. The more children read, the more fluent they become. This tends to make reading more rewarding. Research has found a direct connection between the amount of time a child reads and high academic performance as measured on tests.

Nearly every standardized or proficiency test includes a section on reading. The reading passages may be fiction, nonfiction, or poetry. They may also be graphic information like maps or reference information like library catalog cards and dictionaries. Students are asked to recall, interpret, and reflect on what they read.

The following pages give a review of reading skills. They allow students to practice the skills with questions just like the ones they will be expected to answer on tests. In this workbook section, students will prepare for questions that ask them to:

- find words in **context**.
- find **root words**.
- make **predictions**.
- recognize the **beginning, middle, and end** of a narrative.
- **summarize** a passage.
- **draw conclusions** from what an author has written.
- find the connection between **cause and effect**.
- recognize details that **compare or contrast**.
- **ask questions** about a reading selection.
- practice **locating information** in a reading selection.
- **extend meaning** by making connections with a text.
- understand **graphic information** such as maps, charts, graphs, and diagrams.
- use **reference skills** such as alphabetization and use of libraries, dictionaries, and encyclopedias.

The Life of a Seed

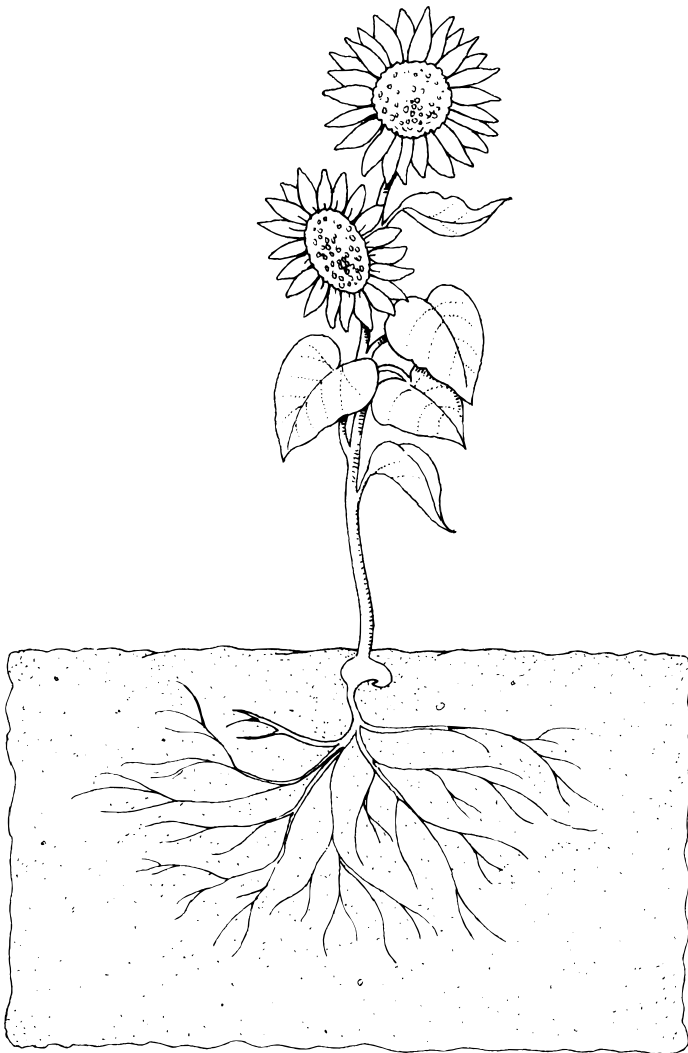
Look at a bowl of dried beans. Do they look alive? Do they seem like something that could grow and change?

Before a seed starts to grow, it is *dormant*. This means it is sleeping. It is not yet a living thing, but it could “wake up” and become living.

To come alive, seeds need certain conditions. They need warmth, water, light, and food. If seeds are frozen, they can't grow. This is why plants stop growing in the winter in cold places.

Water can come from rain or it can come from a watering can. Too much water keeps some seeds from growing.

Plants also need light to grow. Light helps plants make their own food.



Plants also take in food and minerals from soil. Most seeds can sprout without being in soil. They use the food that is inside the seed. There is usually enough food inside a seed to help it grow big enough to become a baby plant.

A sprouted seed sends out roots. These roots can draw food out of soil. At about the same time, the seeds begin to grow the stems and leaves of the plant. As this happens, the baby plant starts its life, growing and reaching toward the light.

Vocabulary



KNOW THE SKILL: **Words in Context**

Some test questions ask you to figure out the meaning of a word. Often you can guess the meaning of the word by thinking about the meanings of other words around it.

Test Example

- 1 Before a seed starts to grow, it is dormant.
Which word means the same as *dormant*?
- tall
 - leafy
 - sleeping

Think About the Answer

The answer is *sleeping*. It can't be *tall* because the seed hasn't started to grow yet. It can't be *leafy* because a seed doesn't have leaves. *Sleeping* makes the most sense.

Now You Try It

- 2 Choose the word that means the same thing as the underlined word.
Light helps plants make their own food. Plants also take in minerals from the soil.
- light
 - food
 - water

Check your answer on page 107.

Vocabulary



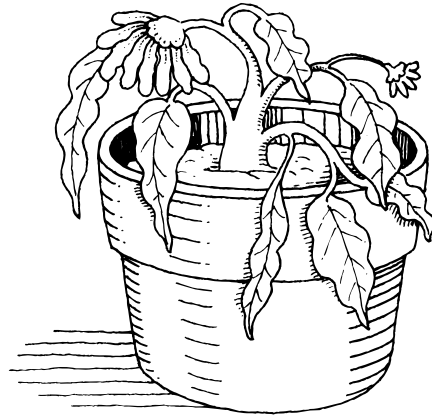
KNOW THE SKILL: **Root Words**

When you see similar words, decide if they have a common root word. Think about the beginning and ending of the word and how they change the meaning of the root word.

Test Example

1 Which word describes the picture?

- healthy
- unhealthy
- healthier



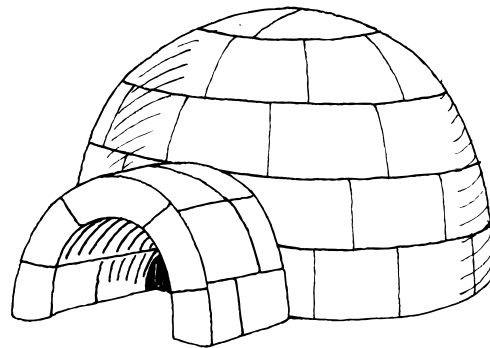
Think About the Answer

The answer is *unhealthy*. The picture shows a sick plant. The root word that is in all four choices is *health*. The beginning *un* means “not.” *Unhealthy* is another way to say “not healthy.”

Now You Try It

2 Which word describes the picture?

- frozen
- unfrozen
- freezer



Check your answer on page 107.

Comprehension

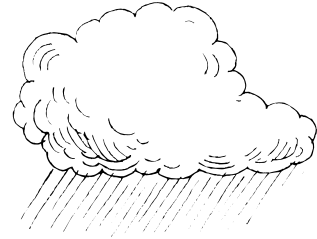
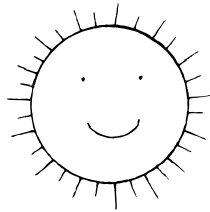


KNOW THE SKILL: **Making Predictions**

Predicting is a skill you use every day. Predicting involves recognizing patterns. Your knowledge of patterns helps you know what will happen in the future.

Test Example

- 1 The clouds grew thick and a warm wind started to blow.
What happened next?



Think About the Answer

The third choice is the best one. The sentence tells you that it got cloudy and windy. The next step is probably rain. The sky in the first choice is too clear. The second choice shows weather that is too cold. The sentence says it was a *warm* wind.

Now You Try It

- 2 Johnny planted the bean seed in moist soil.
What happened next?



Check your answer on page 107.

Comprehension



KNOW THE SKILL: **Time Order Clues**

Use time order words like *before*, *after*, *since*, and *finally* to understand when something happened in the order of events.

Test Example

1 Which word in the sentence is a time order word?

First the baby plants begin to grow leaves so they can take in light.

- first
- leaves
- take

Think About the Answer

The word *first* is a word that we use to say when something happened in time. The other choices are not.

Now You Try It

2 Circle the time order word in this sentence.

A seed sends out roots after it sprouts.

Check your answer on page 107.

Comprehension



KNOW THE SKILL: **Summarizing**

When you summarize, you tell what is most important. Test questions may ask you to choose a word or a few words that summarize something. Base your choice on what is most important in what you just read.

Test Example

1 What is this sentence about?

The seeds need to be damp.

- seeds
- water
- dampness

Think About the Answer

The sentence is about *seeds*. *Seeds* is the subject of the sentence. *Damp* describes the seeds.

Now You Try It

2 What are these sentences about?

The main source of light for plants is the sun. Plants can grow indoors, but they still need light.

- seeds
- sun
- light

Check your answer on page 107.