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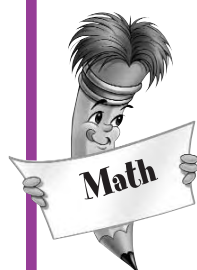
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## CREDITS

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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

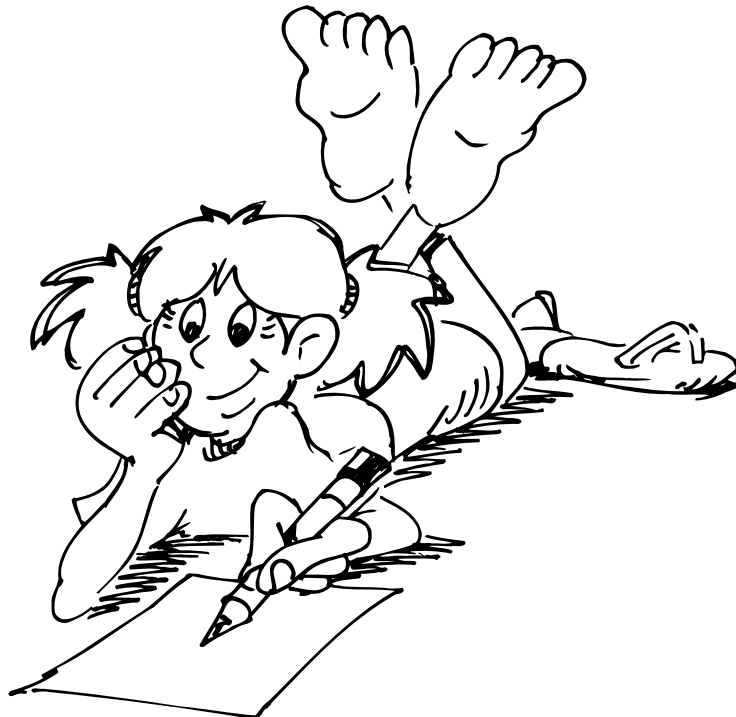
## Preparing for Tests

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 prepare your child for testing.

### Tips for Parents

- Monitor your child's progress.
- Get to know your child's teacher, and find out what he or she thinks you can do to help your child at home.
- Be informed about your state's testing requirements.
- Motivate your child to prepare.
- Make homework part of your child's daily routine.
- Set aside a period of time each day to study with your child.
- Read aloud to your child.
- Share learning experiences with your child.
- 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 very seriously but to have healthy expectations and keep testing in perspective.
- Offer encouragement and support so that your child wants to make a good effort.

### 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 a skill that will help you do well in school and in life—and on standardized and proficiency tests. The more you read, the better you will read. The better you read, the more you will enjoy it, and the higher you will score on tests. Read often, and experiment with many different types of reading materials. Read alone and with others. Read aloud sometimes. Practice listening to how words sound. As you read, think about how stories develop and progress.

Nearly every standardized or proficiency test includes a section on reading. The reading passages may be fiction, nonfiction, or poetry. They may also include graphic information, such as maps, or reference information, such as glossaries and dictionaries. You will be asked to recall, interpret, and reflect on what you read.

The following pages will help you review reading skills. You will practice the skills with questions similar to the ones on standardized tests. If you practice these skills now, you'll perform better on tests. In this workbook section, you will learn to:

- find details that **compare or contrast**.
- know the difference between **facts and opinions**.
- understand the **main idea** of a passage.
- tell how **details** support the main idea.
- find words that have the **same or similar meaning**.
- find words that have **opposite meanings**.
- see the connection between **cause and effect**.
- **make a prediction** based on what you read.
- find the author's **purpose** in writing a work.
- see the **sequence of events**, the order in which things happen.
- know the **characters** in a story.
- **draw conclusions** and support them with evidence.
- understand **graphic information** in maps, charts, graphs, diagrams, and tables.
- use **reference sources** such as library materials, dictionaries, indexes, and tables of contents.

# BEST FRIENDS

**M**ANY PEOPLE KNOW THAT DOGS ARE PEOPLE’S “OLDEST FRIENDS.” BUT DO YOU KNOW FOR HOW LONG THEY HAVE BEEN BEST BUDDIES? DOGS HAVE LIVED WITH PEOPLE FOR MORE THAN 12,000 YEARS. THEY HAVE BEEN HELPERS, HUNTERS, GUARDS, AND FRIENDS. TODAY’S DOGS ARE SIMILAR TO THEIR EARLY ANCESTORS IN MANY WAYS. HOWEVER, THEY ARE ALSO VERY DIFFERENT.

Dogs are related to foxes, wolves, and jackals. The first tame dogs probably wandered near campfires. They might have been attracted by the smell of roasting food. Early people discovered that these wild creatures could become friendly. They also learned that dogs could be helpful.

The first tame dogs were bred to be hunters. Early people chose dogs with sharp senses of smell, hearing, and sight. Sharp eyes, sensitive ears, and keen noses were useful for early hunting dogs.

Over time, people developed new breeds. These new breeds each had their own specialties. Some dogs became watchdogs for flocks of sheep, goats, and cattle. Others herded the livestock. Still others were good at fishing or hunting particular animals. Some even pulled carts, like ponies.

Today, there are more than 400 breeds of dogs. They range in size from jumbo wolfhounds and St. Bernards to pint-sized Chihuahuas and Pekingeses. Large or small, furry or shorthaired, they are all related to the first dogs.

Like the first dogs, today’s breeds were developed for special purposes. Retrievers were bred to retrieve birds that hunters had shot. A pointer spots and points at birds

so hunters can aim at them. The word terrier comes from the French. It means “the earth.” A terrier is a dog who digs into the ground to find small animals. Does your dog like to dig holes? It just might be a terrier!

Some dog breeds have even more unusual beginnings. Have you heard of a dachshund? Its name in German means “badger dog.” Dachshunds were first developed to chase badgers down their holes. The dachshund’s slender body and long nose fit perfectly down the holes. Today, few dachshunds actually chase badgers. But they do make good pets.

Another type of dog was bred to pull sleds through snow and ice. Others were bred to fight, help owners catch fish, or rescue drowning sailors. There are even dogs who were bred to do nothing—except look cute! The Shih Tzu, Pomeranian, and Maltese are tiny dogs. Many people think they are just right for sitting on someone’s lap!

All dogs have at least one thing in common. They are happiest in a group. Dogs don’t live in packs, like their early ancestors or today’s wolves. A dog’s family becomes its pack. Dogs can see their owners as leaders of their pack. They want to please you, the leader. That’s why dogs make such fine pets!



## COMPREHENSION

### KNOW THE SKILL: **COMPARING AND CONTRASTING**

Passages often compare people, places, situations, or things. The passage might explain how two things are similar by comparing or how they are different by contrasting.

### DURING THE TEST

A test question may ask you to compare or contrast two or more things. Start by rereading the passage. Look for sentences that explain how the two things are the same or how they are different. The question could be multiple choice or true/false. It might also ask you to write a few sentences. Passages that compare and contrast two things often use key words and phrases like *in contrast to*, *but*, *however*, *like*, and *unlike*. Watch for them!

### TEST EXAMPLE

- 1 Write two or more sentences that compare the first dogs with today's dogs.

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### THINK ABOUT THE ANSWER

Here's one correct answer: *The first dogs and today's dogs are both pets. Both the first dogs and today's dogs were bred for special purposes. Both are happiest living in packs, either with other dogs or with people.* This answer describes several similarities. It does not mention differences.

### NOW YOU TRY IT

- 2 Write two or more sentences to describe how retrievers and terriers are different.

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Check your answer on page 110.





## COMPREHENSION

### KNOW THE SKILL: **FACT AND OPINION**

Facts are things that can be proven. Opinions are things that people think. They may be true or not true. It is important to know how to tell what is fact and what is opinion.

### DURING THE TEST

Read all the answers before you choose one. The correct answer will be in the passage. Some of the options might be facts or opinions that are not in the passage. These are not correct. To be correct, the facts or opinions must be in the passage. While considering each answer, ask yourself if it might not be true. If it might not be true, then you know it is an opinion.

### TEST EXAMPLE

- 1** Which sentence is an opinion?
- (A) There are more than 400 breeds of dogs.
  - (B) Dachshund means “badger dog” in German.
  - (C) Small dogs are good only for sitting on someone’s lap.
  - (D) The first tame dogs were hunters.

### THINK ABOUT THE ANSWER

Option C is an opinion. It may be true, but it cannot be proven true. Options A, B, and D are facts from the passage that can be proven true.

### NOW YOU TRY IT

- 2** All of the following statements are facts except
- (F) Dogs are related to foxes, wolves, and jackals.
  - (G) Good senses of hearing, sight, and smell were useful for early hunters.
  - (H) The word terrier comes from the French word for “the earth.”
  - (J) All of the statements are facts.

Check your answer on page 110.



### Read the Directions Carefully

This is a no-brainer! Pay attention while you read the directions. It will help you avoid careless errors.



## COMPREHENSION

### KNOW THE SKILL: **MAIN IDEA**

Have you ever asked someone, “What’s the big idea?” Reading tests often ask the same question! This kind of question focuses on the main idea of a passage. Every reading passage has a main idea. The main idea is the most important point in a passage.

### DURING THE TEST

You can often find the main idea of a passage in its first paragraph. It may not always be stated exactly. You may have to “read between the lines” to find the main idea. But if you read carefully, you’ll find it. The last paragraph of a passage sometimes summarizes the main idea. After you’ve read a passage once, ask yourself, “What is the passage about?”

### TEST EXAMPLE

- 1 Which is the main idea of this passage?
- (A) The earliest dogs were hunters.
  - (B) Most dogs have good hearing and sight.
  - (C) Dogs make good pets.
  - (D) Dogs and people have a long history together.

### THINK ABOUT THE ANSWER

Option D is correct. Options A, B, and C are true, but they are not the main idea. They are details that support the main idea.

### NOW YOU TRY IT

- 2 Sometimes you will be asked to write the main idea in your own words. Write two or more sentences to explain the main idea of the passage. Do not use the same wording as the answer to the question above. Provide more information, including details to support your answer.

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Check your answer on page 110.



### Don’t Panic!

If you are getting anxious before or during the test, take several slow, deep breaths to relax. Visualize being in a peaceful and calm place. Remind yourself that you are well prepared. Don’t talk to other students before the test because anxiety can be contagious!



## COMPREHENSION

### KNOW THE SKILL: **DETAILS**

The details of a reading selection help explain the main idea. They “connect the dots” in the writer’s argument. Sometimes they help compare and contrast things. They can be facts or opinions.

### DURING THE TEST

Test questions may ask you to identify details that support the main idea. They may also ask you to find a detail that answers a question about the selection. As you read a test passage, pay attention to the details. Try to understand why the author included them. If a question asks about details you don’t remember, reread that part of the passage. Often, you’ll find details in the middle of a passage that support the main idea.

### TEST EXAMPLE

- 1 Why did people develop different breeds of dogs?
- (A) because they wanted dogs to retrieve dead birds
  - (B) because dogs had good senses of sight, hearing, and smell
  - (C) because dogs make good pets
  - (D) because they wanted dogs to perform different jobs

### THINK ABOUT THE ANSWER

Option D is correct. It is a detail that is found in the selection that answers the question. Options A, B, and C are true and are details from the selection. However, they do not answer the question.

### NOW YOU TRY IT

- 2 Which of the following is a detail that supports the main idea of the passage?
- (F) Dogs and people have a long history together.
  - (G) People developed new breeds, and each had its own special use.
  - (H) Dogs are closely related to other animals like sheep, goats, and cattle.
  - (J) All of the above

Check your answer on page 110.



### “Overview” the Test

If you are allowed, quickly flip through the pages of the test so that you will know what lies ahead. This will help you plan your time. If you are permitted to write on the test, jot notes to yourself. Quickly judge how much time you will need for each part.