TEST-TAKING TIPS AND STRATEGIES

DeKalb County
School District
www.dekalb.k12.ga.us

Support for Great Instruction

Nothing can replace the outstanding instruction provided by teachers leading up to any standardized test; however, students can benefit from learning test-taking strategies to assist them in demonstrating content mastery that excellent teachers have provided all year long. Five such strategies are:

- Write on the test;

- Read the directions carefully;

- Narrow answer choices through elimination;

- Avoid extraneous detail;

- Don't leave any blanks.

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Write on the Test!

While the use of a highlighter is not permissible on the CRCT and EOCT, students can use their #2 pencils to write all over the test booklet. They can:

- **Strike through extraneous detail or incorrect answer choices;**

- **Circle or underline key parts found in the directions or reading passages;**

- **Work problems on the answer document;**

From the 2014 CRCT *Test Examiners Manual*   **From the 2013-2014 EOCT *Examiners Manual***

Say	There are several important things to remember.

- **Read each passage carefully.**

- **Read each question carefully and think about the answer. You may look back to the reading passage as often as necessary.**

- **Answer all questions on your answer sheet, not in your test booklet. You may write in your test booklet, but only answers marked on your answer sheet will be scored.**

- **For each question, choose the one best answer, and fill in the circle in the space provided on your answer sheet.**

- **If you do not know the answer to a question, fill in your best choice. You may return to the question later if you have time.**

- **If you finish the section of the test that you are working on early, you may review your answers in that section only. You may not review any other section or go on to the next section of the test.**

After all students have materials, say:

1. You may write in your test booklet. Be sure to record all your answers on your *Student Answer Document*. If you need additional scratch/graph paper, raise your hand and I will bring you a sheet. You must write your name in the upper right-hand corner of the scratch/graph paper. I will collect all scratch/graph paper at the end of testing.

2. Say:
Before you begin the test, if you have not done so, print your name on the front cover of the *Student Test Booklet*. [*The Examiner and the Proctor should circulate around the room to check that students write their names in the appropriate space.*] I will now read some instructions to you.

Read the Directions Carefully!

Advising the students to read the directions carefully seems simple enough; however, students can quickly overlook key elements of a question and get an answer incorrect. It is a good idea for students to circle, note, underline, etc… key elements in questions, particularly those questions that have words in all uppercase letters:

4   A teacher demonstrates a chemical reaction for the class.

Which of these would NOT show evidence that a chemical reaction has occurred?
A   change in color
B   change in shape
C   formation of a gas
D   formation of a precipitate

In this example, the word "NOT" is in all caps. This should be a signal to students, but they could overlook it and easily pick one of the wrong answers. If they use their pencils to circle the NOT, it may help them to look for the correct answer.

Narrow Answer Choices Through Elimination!

Students can often narrow answer choices, even in those situations where they may not fully know the correct answer

Read the following paragraph.

Everyone could tell it had once been a huge tree. The roots at its base were as large as a grown person. When the tree died, someone had used a chainsaw to cut away most of the tree. All that was left was a truncated stump of wood. The stump made a picnic table that could seat eight people around it comfortably.
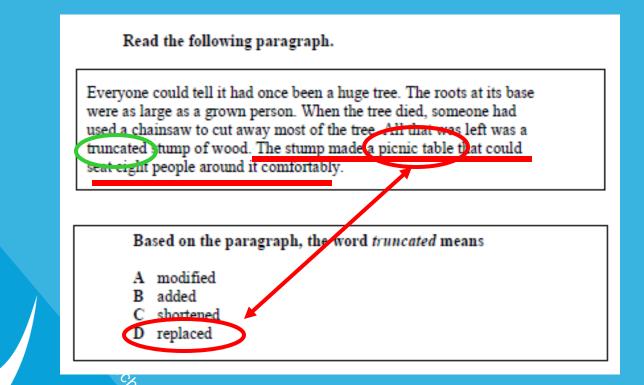
Based on the paragraph, the word *truncated* means

A modified
B added
C shortened
D replaced

Circling and/or underlining key words and phrases may help remove two answer choices in this example.

Avoid Extraneous Details!

Test vendors will include data and information in questions that are designed to serve as distracters for students. In the same passage from the previous slide, the sentence about the stump becoming a picnic table could cause a student to focus on answer choice D.

Read the following paragraph.

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Based on the paragraph, the word *truncated* means

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Don't Leave Any Blanks

Both the CRCT and EOCT only score correct answers. A blank answer is the same as an incorrect answer in that no points are given, but none are taken away either. Students should be taught to not leave any blank responses.

From the 2014 CRCT *Test Examiners Manual*

Say	There are several important things to remember.
	• Read each passage carefully.
	• Read each question carefully and think about the answer. You may look back to the reading passage as often as necessary.
	• Answer all questions on your answer sheet, not in your test booklet. You may write in your test booklet, but only answers marked on your answer sheet will be scored.
	• For each question, choose the one best answer, and fill in the circle in the space provided on your answer sheet.
	• If you do not know the answer to a question, fill in your best choice. You may return to the question later if you have time.
	• If you finish the section of the test that you are working on early, you may review your answers in that section only. You may not review any other section or go on to the next section of the test.

From the 2013-2014 EOCT *Study Guide*

9. **Think logically.** If you have tried your best to answer a question but you just aren't sure of the correct answer, use the process of elimination. Look at each possible answer choice. If it doesn't seem like a logical response, eliminate it. Do this until you've narrowed down your choices. If this doesn't work, take your best educated guess. It is better to mark something than to leave it blank.

Teach the Strategies

Like any other set of skills, students must practice test-taking strategies for mastery.

Consider how to teach these test-taking strategies to students to assist them with *all* assessments, and avoid waiting until the day of any test to mention them.

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