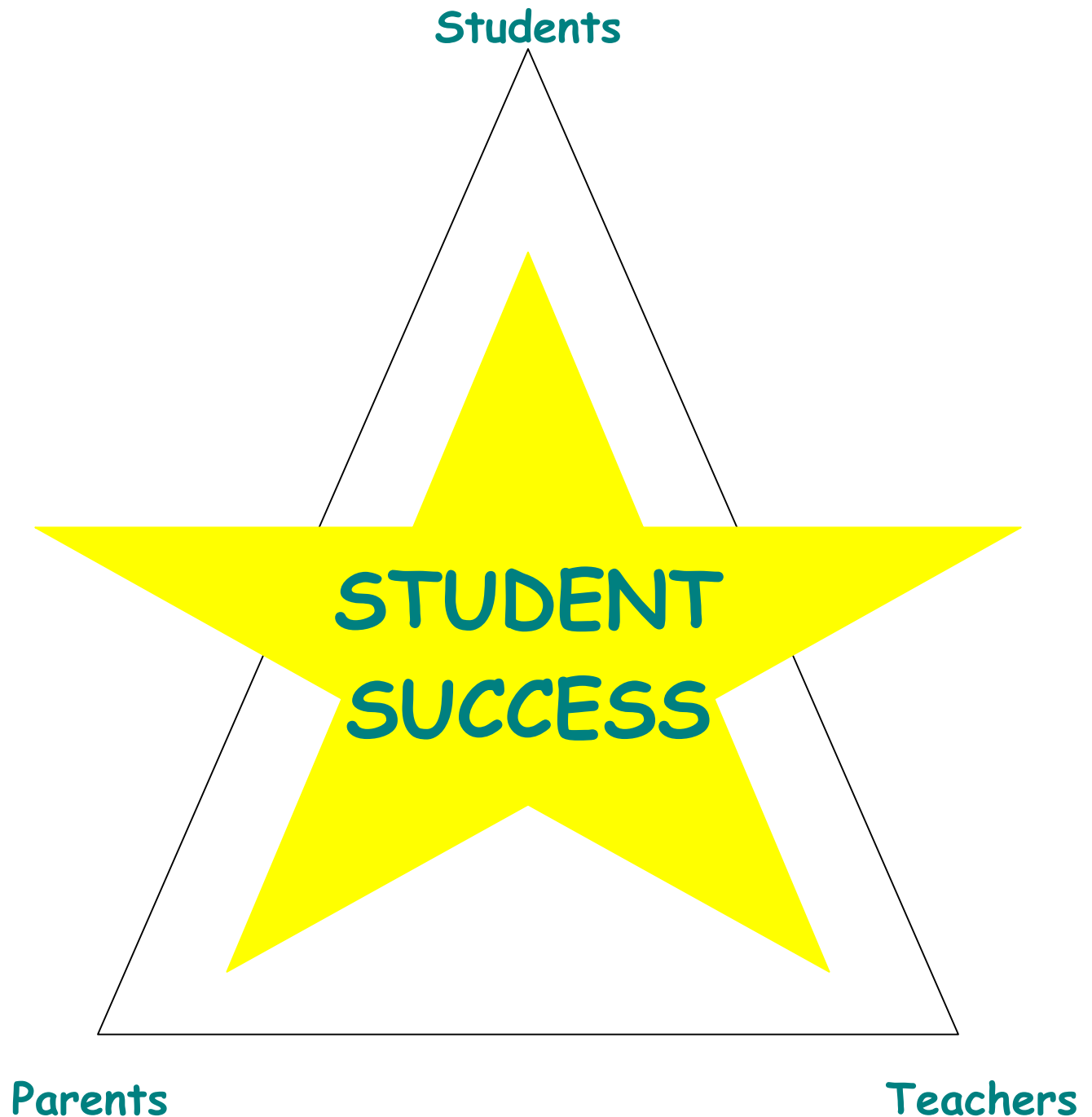


**Qualters Middle School
Test-Taking Strategies Handbook**



Part A: General Test-Taking Strategies for Students

Test, quizzes, and other formal assessments are important parts of daily life at school. The only time these tasks are difficult is if you are not fully prepared. Being prepared doesn't mean staying up late the night before to cram as much information into your head! This only causes you to be tired so that when you do take the test or quiz, you can't think clearly enough to answer the questions you do know! Being prepared for a test, quiz, or other assessments means that you have kept up with the course material since the first day of class! Here are a few general tips to help you develop good test-taking strategies.

Before The Test

- ⇒ Start preparing for tests and quizzes the first day of class. Read over any handouts the teacher gives you that tell you the important concepts that you will be learning in the unit.
- ⇒ Plan to review the material learned in each class on a weekly basis. Find a "study-buddy" or create a small study group of focused kids you can easily work with without becoming too distracted. Plan on meeting at the same time each week to go over any reading, notes, labs, activities, or projects you have been assigned during the week.
- ⇒ Keep up with the day to day assignments. Have a clear understanding of homework assignments before leaving class. Keep a record of assignments received and completed. Turn in homework on time. Get make-up assignments when returning from an absence. See the teachers for additional help.
- ⇒ When you review the material on a weekly basis, you should be doing more than re-reading the assignments. You should ask yourself (or have someone else ask you) questions about the material. Use your textbook as a reference to fill-in any notes that are not complete.
- ⇒ Make a list each week of any questions you have regarding the material that was presented to you. Approach your teacher with these questions. Chances are, if you have these questions, at least a few others in the class have them as well (only they might not be aware they have them)!
- ⇒ Your weekly review sessions should be broken into small chunks of time rather than one huge amount of time. You will retain more information and your brain will get less tired.

- ⇒ When studying from a textbook or guided notes from the teacher, change each heading or topic into a question. Check to see if you can answer the question quickly and accurately. Based on the goals of the unit and the material the teacher emphasized over the course of the week, try to predict what types of short-answer or essay questions might be on the test. Outline answers to these questions and review them!
- ⇒ If the content requires that you learn a number of unfamiliar words, flash cards are often a helpful way to review. Review the cards in random order each day.
- ⇒ Get a good night's rest and eat a good breakfast before taking any test.

During the Test

There are also some general strategies to keep in mind when you are **taking** the test.

- ⇒ Read the directions carefully! Many points are lost because students didn't follow the directions. Ask the teacher to clarify the directions if you don't understand what you are being asked to do.
- ⇒ Preview the test to see how much time you can allot for each section. Remember that short answer or essay questions will take longer than multiple choice or true-false questions.
- ⇒ Read every question on the test before you start. Once you have read each question, go back and answer the questions you are certain of. Then, go back and pace yourself through the rest of the test.
- ⇒ Save time at the end of the test to review your test and make sure you haven't skipped any questions or left any questions blank. Make sure you have answered all parts of each question. Check for careless errors!

After the Test

- ⇒ When you get your test back, pay careful attention to where you lost points. Listen carefully while the teacher goes over the test. Make note of any important facts you left out that might have caused you to lose points. This will help reinforce the information and give you a better understanding of the teacher's expectations for the next test.

Part B: Specific Test-Taking Strategies for Students

Tests and quizzes come in many varieties. Some involve all written responses (sometimes called an **essay test** or short-answer test); some are **objective tests** (which usually involve multiple-choice, true-false), while others are more **problem based** (like a math test). There are strategies you can learn that will help you with each type of test. Here are some suggestions!

The Essay Test

- ⇒ Read all the questions through carefully. Underline or highlight specific directions you need to follow. Make note of how many parts the question has. Be sure to answer each part.
- ⇒ As you are pre-reading the questions, jot down any key words or ideas that come to mind as you read each question.
- ⇒ Estimate the time you will have for each question. Keep track of your time so that you don't spend too much time on one question.
- ⇒ Answer the "easiest" question first then concentrate on answering one question at a time. Getting started on something you're sure of is one way to reduce any anxiety you may have.
- ⇒ Decide what kind of answer the question requires before you begin writing. The chart that follows, "Words Commonly Used in Essay Questions", will help you determine how to write your answer. Know these words!
- ⇒ Before you start writing, make a brief, logical outline or web for your answer to ensure good organization and prevent careless omissions. It's not how much you say but what you say and how well you say it that counts!
- ⇒ Get down to business in your first paragraph and avoid long-winded introductions. Your goal in answering most essay questions is to get the maximum amount of point-earning information in the shortest amount of time.
- ⇒ Where appropriate, use factual details to support your answer. Use key vocabulary that you learned in class, in the text, or on handouts. This gives the teacher evidence that you know what you are talking about!
- ⇒ Write legible, complete sentences and paragraphs.

- ⇒ Re-read your answers - do they say what you mean? Correct all grammar and spelling errors.
- ⇒ If you run out of time, outline the remaining information.

Words Commonly used in Essay Questions

When reading a test question it is very important to understand exactly what your teacher is asking, and to provide what is called for! Learn these key words!

If you are asked to:	You should do the following:	Examples:
Classify	Place items in related groups, then name or title each group	Listed below are twenty items. Classify them in four main groups; then name or give a title to each group.
Compare	Tell how things are alike; use concrete examples	Compare the American form of government with the ancient Greeks.
Contrast	Tell how things are different; use concrete examples	Contrast the writing styles of Avi and J.K. Rowlings.
Define	Give a clear, concise, authoritative meaning; make sure your definition is related to the subject you are being tested in	Define plankton
Discuss	Consider the various points of view by presenting all sides of the issue	Discuss the use of chemotherapy in the treatment of cancer.
Evaluate	Make a judgement based on the evidence and support it; give good and bad points	Evaluate the use of pesticides.
Explain	Make clear and plain; give the reason or cause	Explain how a natural disaster can help mankind.
Illustrate	Give examples, pictures, diagrams, or concrete examples to clarify your answer	Illustrate the use of a drawbridge,
Interpret	Express your thinking by giving the meaning as you see it	Interpret the line "Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink".
If you are asked to:	You should do the following:	Examples:

Justify	Give some evidence by supporting your statement with facts	Justify the decision to bomb Nagasaki, Japan.
List	Write in a numbered fashion	List five reasons to support your statement.
Outline	Use a specific and shortened form to organize main ideas, supporting details, and examples	Outline the leading cause of World War I.
Prove	Provide factual evidence to back up the truth of the statement	Prove that the whaling industry has led to almost extinction of certain varieties.
Relate	Show the relationship among concepts	Relate man's survival instincts to those of animals.
Summarize	Condense the main points in the fewest words possible	Summarize early man's methods of self-defense.
Trace	Describe in steps the progression of something	Trace the importance of the prairie schooner to the opening of the west.

The Objective Test (multiple choice, true-false)

- ⇒ Answer all questions in order without skipping or jumping around. Identify doubtful answers by marking in the margin and recheck these at the end. Other questions on the test may give you a hint about answers you are having difficulty with.
- ⇒ Do not linger too long on any one question. Choose your best answer and move on. Return later if time allows.
- ⇒ Re-read all questions containing negative wording such as "not" or "least". Be especially careful of those questions using a double negative, as these must be read and re-read very carefully to make sure you understand the question.
- ⇒ Check for qualifying words such as "all - most - some - none", "always - usually - seldom - never", "best - worst", or "smallest - largest". If one qualifier can be substituted and the answer makes a better statement, then the answer is false. If your substitution does not make a better statement, then the answer is true.

- ⇒ Watch for hidden details in true - false questions. Sometimes names, dates, places, or other details are added to make the statement inaccurate.
- ⇒ If a true-false question has more than one idea or concept in it, all the parts must be true, or the statement is false.
- ⇒ Look for grammatical connections between the question and the answer in a multiple - choice questions. A choice is almost always wrong if it and the question do not make a grammatically correct sentence.
- ⇒ Be cautious of changing your answers to true - false and multiple - choice questions without good reason. Your first "guess" is more likely correct than are subsequent "guesses", so be sure to have a sound reason for changing your answer.
- ⇒ Apply the same approach to answering both true-false and multiple-choice questions. The same technique will work equally well for both, since multiple-choice questions are basically true-false questions arranged in groups.

Problem Tests

- ⇒ Write down any formulas, equations, and rules on the top of the paper before you actually begin the test problems.
- ⇒ If you get stuck on a particular problem, leave it and move on to the next. Go back later and try again! Do not leave a question blank - take a stab at it!
- ⇒ Even if you know that your answer is wrong, turn in your work - you may get partial credit for using the right process.
- ⇒ Show all steps in your work and clearly identify or label your answer so that it can be quickly found.
- ⇒ Whenever possible, re-check all answers. Remember, when solving any equation, you can use substitution to check that your answer is accurate.
- ⇒ Take time to write legibly and make your corrections, if any, as neat as possible.
- ⇒ Leave space between your answers. You may need it later to add additional ideas or details when you return to proof read your work.

⇒ If you come to a question that you think you can't answer, leave it to be answered last, but don't leave it unanswered. You may get partial credit for even a poor answer.

Part C: Parent Test - Support Strategies

Here are some suggestions that parents can use to help their child prepare for tests, reduce anxiety, and learn what's going on in school!

Preparing for the Test - General Strategies

- ⇒ Write test dates on a family calendar located in a common area of the house.
- ⇒ Try to schedule appointments on non-testing days.
- ⇒ Work with your child to plan a study schedule that doesn't leave everything for the last minute.
- ⇒ Encourage your child to study "actively". Have them create flash cards, outline a particular section of the text, draw pictures of key concepts or vocabulary, etc. Children who actively study, rather than letting their eyes wander down the page of notes, tend to perform better on tests.
- ⇒ Have your child (or yourself) make up questions from the material and try to answer them completely and concisely.
- ⇒ Have your child make note of any material they are having difficulty with and help them to formulate questions that can be asked of the teacher before the test.
- ⇒ Encourage your child to ask questions at home and at school.
- ⇒ Talk to your child about test-taking strategies. It is important to remind them not to get stuck on any one question, but to keep moving and return later to the missed questions.
- ⇒ Make sure your child is well rested and fed on the morning of a test.
- ⇒ Make studying fun! Studying will not be fun if you and your child start late. Encourage your child to tell you about test dates as soon as they are assigned.

Part E: Reducing Test Anxiety

Students may experience anxiety about tests and this may be heightened just before the testing situation. A certain degree of test anxiety is normal and may help students prepare more effectively, work more efficiently, and remain focused during testing. Too much anxiety, however, can negatively affect one's performance. Here are a few suggestions to help reduce test anxiety.

Student Strategies

- ⇒ Share your feelings of anxiety with parents and teachers.
- ⇒ Think of the test as an opportunity to show what you know.
- ⇒ Review homework and materials that are relevant to the test.
- ⇒ Begin studying as soon as the test date is announced.
- ⇒ Relax, breathe deeply, and stay focused on the test.
- ⇒ Remember the test is only one way your academic performance is measured.

Parent Strategies

- ⇒ Discuss the test openly and in a positive way.
- ⇒ Have realistic expectations of your child's performance while encouraging his/her best effort.
- ⇒ Emphasize that the test is only one measure of academic performance.
- ⇒ Emphasize that test scores do not determine a person's worth.

APPENDIX

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