

Little Tricks Can Help Improve Your Score On Tests

By The Reading Laboratory
Written for
Newspaper Enterprise Assn.
Before we start today's article, a little perspective will be a good idea. If you have prepared adequately for the test, if you have been studying day by day, you will be able to get a good mark without any trouble. But at the same time, you will be able to raise your score a few tricks of test-making and test-taking.

Psychologists have recognized for a long time that some people tend to be better on a test than some others—regardless of intelligence. This is partly due to the fact that some people work better under stress than others do, but it is also true that some people are simply more test-wise than others. They know how to make a test work for them.

Take the example of objective tests, that is, true-false tests, multiple-choice tests, and so forth. The unsophisticated test-taker starts to answer the first question and works his way through to the end. That sounds sensible, but it really is not. The test-wise student reads the test all the way through before he starts. He is looking to see if the test gives away some answers. Most long objective tests will. For instance, the answer to question 5 (or a good clue to the answer) may be implied by question 20—or maybe by question 3, 21 and 22, when they are taken together.

The true-false tests are another case in point. Watch out for the little but so-important universal qualifiers on the true-false tests. The universal qualifiers are "always," "never," "all," "none," and words like them. The sentence in which they appear is usually false. For instance, we have the sentence, "Men are created equal"—which may be a true sentence. But compare it to: "Men are created equal in all ways." This is obviously false. Some men are smarter than others, stronger than others and so forth. See what a difference the "in all ways" makes? Be very careful of these little universal qualifiers.

You will also run into the standardized multiple-choice tests. These are IQ tests, vocabulary tests, placement tests and the like that are not made up by your teacher. They are usually printed in regular booklet form.

Many of the standardized multiple-choice tests are scored by counting just the right answers. No points are taken off for wrong answers. That means that on a 100-question test, if you got 40 right and 60 wrong, your score would be twice as high as it would be if you took your time and got 20 right and none wrong—just the right answers are counted.

You must be careful, though, because some tests—College Boards are one—penalize you for wrong answers. The best thing to do is to ask your proctor how the test is scored—whether it's a right-minus-wrong test or if just the right answers are counted. If there are no penalties for wrong answers, fill in every blank on the test! Even if you take some wild guesses, the law of averages says that you will get some of them right.

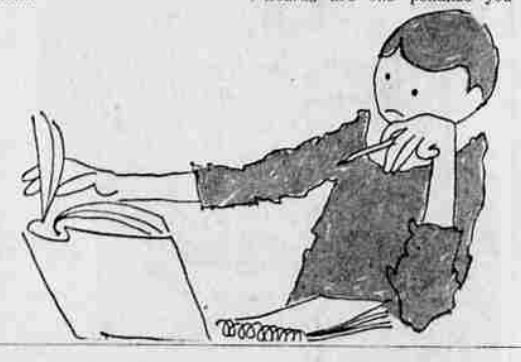
Finally, never just give up and leave an essay question blank. That is the surest way to get a zero. Put something down! Make it sound as plausible as you can and you will get some points—perhaps for originality. But never just quit.

Remember, that these are all ways to make the structure of the test work for you. They are little tricks that may help you

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