Terra Nova Testing Tips

It’s that time of year again . . . time for standardized tests! Our Lady of Mercy School is getting ready. Test schedules are being coordinated, test booklets counted, and practice test booklets are being distributed. This year, our goal is to show an increase in Terra Nova test scores. Some strategies we have adopted to help us reach our goal are to add an additional day to our testing schedule (this will reduce daily testing time), spend more time practicing Terra Nova test taking within the classroom, provide parents with resources to practice Terra Nova test-taking at home, and provide parents with some Terra Nova Testing Tips. Your child has a standardized test coming up soon, and these test-prep tips and strategies will help them relax and do their best.

How to Prepare
Remember, your child’s teacher has been doing some test preparation in school. Your goal is not to cram a year’s worth of learning into a few days, but to familiarize your child with the test. At this point you should help them become familiar and comfortable with the format of the test they are going to take, and prepare for the day. Here are some preparation activities you can try:

- Buy a practice book that imitates the actual test as closely as possible. Most practice books indicate which tests they imitate on their covers. Practice books can be found at Barnes and Nobles and School Aids, as well as on the internet.
- Have your child take one or more of the timed practice tests in the book so that they become comfortable with the length and design of the actual test.
- Go over the answers with your child. If time and patience allow, go over all the answers -- right and wrong. Have your child review some of the questions so they understand why they got the question correct or what they need to do to get it right the next time.
- Look for weak spots in your child’s test and then concentrate on those areas in the test prep book.

Visit [www.brighteducation.com](http://www.brighteducation.com). Parents can sign up for a week of free online practice Terra Nova tests. Using these tests will help students become familiar with the test format.

If your child’s test is less than a week away, forgo reviewing his answers in detail and concentrate on helping them learn some test-taking strategies.

Testing Strategies

Below, please find answers to the most common questions students have about standardized testing strategies.

Q: Should I guess if I don't know the answer?
A: In the case of Terra Nova, the answer is yes. The Terra Nova does not take off points for answering incorrectly; they just don’t add any.

Q: What should I do if I'm stuck on a question?
A: Skip it. Your child can always return to the question once they have answered those they are more sure about. But advise your child to be careful about filling in the answer sheet. It may seem obvious to skip that line on the answer sheet when you skip the question, but in the more intense atmosphere of a testing situation, it’s easy to forget to do this.

Q: How can I avoid skipping a line on the answer sheet?
A: Often, students find themselves at the end of a test, with two or three answer choices left to fill in on the answer sheet.

To avoid this situation give your child a piece of paper to use as scrap. They can use the straight edge of the paper to keep their place on the answer sheet.
Reassure your child
Tell your child that the test will be used to see how well they are learning and to evaluate how well a school is educating its students. It is important for students to have a sense of the broader context.

Put the test in perspective
Explain that this test score is looked in addition to many other pieces of information, such as grades and progress over time. This may be a big test, but it is still just one test!

Get to school early
On Terra Nova test days, be sure to get to school early. Students who are tardy will not be permitted to enter their classroom once testing is in progress.

Take a deep breath when student gets nervous
Have students practice deep breathing exercises before the test. They can take a deep breath and silently count to ten. Then have them take shorter deep breaths in between passages or sections of the test -- counting to three only. This exercise is fast and simple, but it really works!

Listen carefully
Listen carefully to the instructions from the teacher, and read the directions to each question carefully. Be sure you understand exactly what you have to do for each part of the test. Look at ALL answer choices and choose the best and most complete answer. If, you are not sure which answer is correct eliminate choices that you know are incorrect. Then focus on the remaining choices.

Look for key words
Look for key words in test directions and questions such as: choose, describe, explain, compare, identify, similar, except, not, and but.

Changing answers
A word of caution about changing answers - usually your first choice is correct. If you have to change an answer be sure to erase completely.

Stay focused
Stay focused on the test, even if other students finish early. Don't get distracted.

Get a good night’s rest
Make sure your child will be comfortable and alert on the day of the test. They should get a good night’s sleep the night before and a light breakfast the morning of the test. (A heavy breakfast can make students sleepy.)

Dress in layers
Have your child dress comfortably in layers so that he can take sweatshirts off or put them on, depending on the temperature of the room.

Finally, tell your child that the test will have some difficult questions on it. All of the questions are not supposed to be easy. Explain that they may not be able to answer all of the questions.