

PARENTING TIPS

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD PREPARE FOR AN ENGLISH ASSESSMENT in Years 7-10

DIET

Advise your child to not indulge in too much sugar or to binge. A 'sugar-hit' will give a burst of energy, but then will result in a severe lull. Natural sugars found in healthy foods, especially fruit, vegetables, fruit juices and dairy products will be more sustaining. Eating healthily and regularly is most important.

REGULAR BREAKS

When studying, most of us need to stop every 40 minutes and have a short, five-minute break. Students should do something totally different, such as play with the dog, phone a friend, have a healthy snack or go for a walk. A blend of exercise, relaxation and refreshment is most important.

PREPARATION

A key aspect is to start getting ready well in advance to alleviate stress. Encourage your child **to be in control** of his/her studies.



Encourage an early start

Suggest to your child that he/she **organise** the notes and research for each English topic and put them into separate folders of different colours. Using colours assists memory in most of us because we can associate the information far quicker. Your child might even like to use different coloured pens and paper for each topic as long as they can be clearly seen at night under artificial lighting.

Encourage your child to not leave preparation until the night before as it will not be well registered in his or her memory. Some students will swear that cramming is the way to go, but in reality, they only have limited recall.

CHECK THE ASSESSMENT ROSTER (for the Half-yearly or Yearly assessments)

Ask your child to write out a list of the assessments in the order that they will occur. This will indicate which subject to begin with and which topics to emphasise.

When students are concerned over a subject, they tend to avoid it. However, this is the one thing that they should not avoid.

WHERE TO START?

Suggest that your child select the techniques that work best for him/her. These include:

- reviewing the English lesson notes
- selecting any key concepts and making a list of important terms
- writing key concepts onto flash cards (which are easy to refer to and organise) and on the back, writing general ideas and details
- organising the cards into groups by numbers or colours (to match topics) so that they are easy to find and reorganise
- lying the cards out on his/her table so that his/her mind sees and remembers how to answer in an organised and logical way
- completing some English practice questions in a time-limit by referring to the flash cards and notes and even referring to the text for examples and details (- if your child just does this only verbally, he/she can fall into the trap of saying, "I knew that!")
- for the School Certificate reference assessment, completing a whole practice English paper according to how the assessment paper is structured.

STUDY GROUP

If your child is a strong verbal learner, you might suggest that he/she form a small study group in which they ask one another questions or provide commentary about their material.



Establish an exam routine

AN ASSESSMENT ROUTINE

Encourage your child to establish a personal assessment routine. Here is a sample one:

- Write your name or student number on the answer sheet.
- Read the instructions to students first and work out how much time to spend on each question.
- If there are sections of writing, then write down the time to stop each section and begin another.
- Read and re-read the question.
- Underline key words and decide how to go about answering the question. Look for words like “discuss”, “compare”, “explain” and look for words like “including”, “in reference to”.
- Answer the question first that you know well and can do without difficulty and then work on the harder one.
- Read multiple choice questions very carefully (as they are designed to trick).
- Review and proofread all your answers especially for spelling, punctuation and grammar.



Encourage preparation and organisation

MANAGING ANXIETY

Remind your child that English assessments measure what you have learnt and not your worth as a person.

Most anxiety stems from fear of poor performance. If your child studies and assesses himself/herself adequately prior to an assessment, it should boost his/her confidence.

Symptoms of stress and anxiety can be worsened by significant changes in sleep and eating routines. But they can be reduced by physical activity, such as walking, swimming or relaxation exercises.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Encourage your child to realise that English assessment questions vary and so should the answers. In objective assessments (multiple choice questions), they are assessing how well your child reads a question and then solves the problem in it.

Remind your child to not edit the question by dropping or adding words and meanings.

Remind your child that he/she will need to support a comment with examples and evidence, especially in a literature question.

At all times, your child should focus on the process of answering the questions rather than on the end result.