

Tips for Helping Your Testing Go Well

For a test to be accurate, you need to do your best. Here are some tips to help your testing go well.

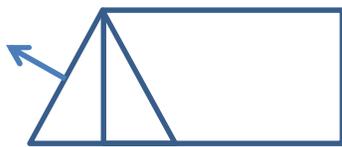
Relax: Feeling nervous is normal, but you should not let this distract you from doing your best. Your job is not to do perfect. Just to do the best you can. Like a heart doctor might put you on a treadmill to see how your heart works when pushed, we will give your brain some jobs and puzzles to do to see how it works for you when you push it to do something. The tests are NOT tests of your worth as a person. Don't worry or feel embarrassed if it feels like you are doing poorly.

Listen to Directions: The test giver will do his or her best to make sure you know what to do. Most tests have clear directions the test giver will read out loud to you. Pay attention and follow directions carefully. Since some tests are timed, don't start before you are told. Also, don't try to out-think or guess what's going to happen next. Take one task at a time, and ask for directions to be repeated if you're not sure what to do.

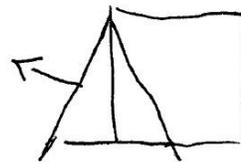
Be Careful: This is a big deal. Many people lose points on tests just because they weren't careful or they assumed details didn't matter. Many tests are scored using very picky rules.

For example, you might take a memory test that has you listen to a story and repeat what you heard. If the story was about a beaver who built his den out of pine branches, you can get points by remembering exact words such as "built," "den," "pine," and "branches." If you say the story was about "A beaver who *made his house out of tree limbs*," we can see you got the basics, but you lose a lot of points for not being exact. Be sure to repeat things using the same words, if possible.

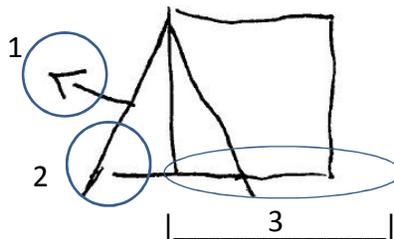
In another example, you might be asked to copy a shape on a page, such as this one:



A person not being careful may copy it like this:



The person's drawing looks *pretty* close to the real shape, but they actually lost many points for not connecting corners and lines (1 and 2), and making the box a square rather than a rectangle (3).



These are picky but simple errors that could be fixed just by looking closely, taking your time, and being careful. It is OK to erase and fix a mistake. Don't settle and go on until your drawing looks as exact as you can make it. Unless you are specifically told to work fast, being careful is more important than speed.

Sleep, Eat, and Drink: Being tired, hungry, and thirsty will not allow you do your best. Sleep well the night before. Eat something good for you, and drink water before coming. You can bring a snack and drink with you. We can give you water, coffee, or tea. Just ask.

Dress Comfortably: Testing is not a fashion show. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes. The testing room is sometimes cool. If you get cold easily, bring a sweatshirt or sweater. Do not wear perfumes or other scents, nor wear a lot of jewelry on your wrists or fingers.

Medications, Alcohol, and other Drugs: Unless needed for your health, do not take pills that make you sleepy, drink alcohol, or use other drugs such as marijuana for at least 12 hours before your visit. This includes sleeping or allergy pills you buy at the store. If your doctor gives you anxiety pills like Xanax (alprazolam) or Ativan (lorazepam), try not to take these before your testing visit. These pills help you relax, but they also hurt your memory. It would be better to be a nervous and alert than relaxed but foggy. If you must take them, be sure to let us know before testing starts.

Diabetes: If you are a diabetic and monitor your blood sugar levels, please bring your meter with you. We will ask you to check your sugar levels just before, and perhaps even once during testing to make sure you are in a range that allows for good mental functioning.

Pain Medication: Having mild to moderate pain will not change your test scores. Tylenol and ibuprofen are OK if taken in normal doses. If you take prescription pain medicine, do not take any more **or** less than what you are used to. After adjusting to them over time, pain medicine generally does not hurt your scores on brain tests. It makes the most difference when you take more than usual and you become tired and foggy, or take less than usual and you feel sick and in more pain. Just take your medication as usual.

Ask for Breaks: Bathroom, snack, rest, or cigarette breaks can be taking at most any time. You will be sitting for quite a while, so feel free to stand and stretch whenever you want. If you are in the middle of a test that can't be paused, you might be asked to wait a few minutes until that test is over before a break.

Glasses and Hearing Aids: Bring any eyeglasses or hearing aids you might need. Be sure to tell us if you are having a hard time hearing or seeing the tests.

Learning Problems: Let us know if you have never been able to read, spell, or do math very well. This is very common, and knowing this beforehand allows us to work around it and not let it get in your way.

Helpers and Cell Phones: Nobody except you and the person testing you can be in the room while you are working. Guests can wait in the waiting room, or leave and come back for you. Please turn off your cell phone or leave it in the car. You can use it during breaks. If you are doing a test on your own such filling out a checklist or doing a test on the computer, you will not be allowed to call anyone or look up information on your phone. These tests must be done only by you, and without outside help or suggestions.

Give Your Best and Honest Effort: How hard you are trying makes a big difference in your test scores. Of course, we expect you to give your best effort on everything. Be sure to ask for a break if you begin to feel tired, foggy, or confused. There may be some tests that are used to check how hard you are trying, so be sure to do your best on everything. Be perfectly honest when filling out checklists. Do not leave out important information about your symptoms, but there is also no need to overstate your symptoms in order to be taken seriously. Honesty and trying your best are always the best policies.