HINTS FOR BETTER TEST-TAKING:
STANDARDIZED TESTS

Workshop sponsored by:

The Dr. Mack Gipson, Jr.,
Tutorial and Enrichment Center

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STANDARDIZED TESTS

1. Read the directions.

2. Start with the passages that interest you or that deal with subjects you know. (Do not forget to go back to the passages you skipped.)

3. Keep moving on. Do not spend too much time on difficult questions. Instead, skip them and try to answer the other questions. Go back to the difficult ones later.

4. Adjust your reading speed according to the material. Read more slowly if the information is technical, difficult, or full of facts. Read more quickly if the information concerns a topic you are familiar with.

5. Make a quick survey or overview of the selection before you read the passage, so you have a purpose:
   a. Read the title. Think about what the selection will probably be about.
   b. Think about the kind of vocabulary you will see.
   c. Read the subheadings if there are any.
   d. Read the first sentence in each paragraph. It usually contains the most important ideas in the selection.
   e. Read the questions. They may steer you through the reading.
   f. Finally, read the passage.

6. Increase your vocabulary as part of your everyday activities:
   a. Learn prefixes, suffixes, and roots. (If you can learn the 84 roots and 44 prefixes that are most common in our language, you will be able to understand thousands of words!)
   b. Read!!!! (Read signs, posters, newspapers, magazines, books, directions, etc.)
   c. Use the dictionary.
   d. Play word games (do crossword puzzles, play Scrabble, etc.).
   e. Listen to people who speak well. Ask them to explain the meanings of words they use that you do not understand.
   f. Keep a list of new words as you come across them. Try to learn them.
   g. Try to learn special vocabulary used in different subject areas (science, history, sociology, psychology, etc.). This will help you understand specialized passages on the test.
   h. Use the new words you learn every day.

7. When looking for the main idea, read the opening and summary sentences of each paragraph. (The topic sentence is often found at the beginning or end of a paragraph.)

8. When asked to pick a title for a passage, avoid choices that are too broad or too specific.

9. When asked to make inferences, base your answers on what the passage implies, not on what it states directly.

10. When asked about attitude, tone, or mood, look for words that convey emotion, express values, or paint pictures.
## TRICKS AND TRAPS

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<tr>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>KEY WORDS</th>
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| Identifies what the author thinks is important | • Note that  
• Of importance is  
• Don’t overlook |
| Often turns a reasonable statement into one that is not true | TERMS (QUALIFIERS):  
absolutely  
completely  
no  
all  
etirely  
none  
always  
every  
only  
at all times  
ever  
under no circumstances |
| Asks you to identify the main idea or purpose of the passage | • The main point of the passage is  
• The passage is primarily concerned with  
• The author’s primary purpose is  
• The chief theme can best be described as  
• Which of these titles best describes the content of the passage?  
• Which of these statements best expresses the main idea? |
| SIGNAL WORDS: | furthermore  
moreover  
notably  
significantly  
topic sentence  
central point |
| Asks you to identify the specific details of the passage | • According to the author  
• The author states all of the following EXCEPT  
• According to the passage, which of the following is true?  
• According to the passage, the chief characteristic is  
• Which of these statements is best supported by the passage?  
• Which of these statements is not given as evidence of |
| TERMS: | major detail  
minor detail  
primary support  
secondary support  
supporting details  
supporting points |

Sources used in developing this packet:
<table>
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| Asks you to make **inferences** based on the passage | • It can be inferred from the passage that  
• The passage suggests that the author would support  
• The author implies that  
• The author apparently feels that  
• According to the passage, it is likely that  
• The passage is most likely directed toward an audience of  
• Which of these statements can be inferred from the passage?  
• From this statement, we can infer that  
• We can conclude that  
• By stating that _______, the author means  
• You can assume that  

**TERMS:**  
logic  
logical inference  
informed guess |
| Asks you to identify **tone and attitude** based on the passage | • The author’s attitude to the problem can best be described as  
• Which of the following best describes the author’s tone?  
• The author’s tone is that of a person attempting to  
• The author’s presentation is marked by a tone of  
• The passage indicates that the author experiences a feeling of  

**TERMS:**  
conversational  
dignified  
sincere  
scholarly  
introspective  
suspenseful  
apathetic  
humorous  
straightforward  
objective  
regretful  
pedantic  
matter-of-fact  
outspoken  
tolerant  
formal  
compassionate  
ambivalent  
indignant  
desperate  
sympathetic  
affectionate  
critical  
arrogant  
admirining  
forced  
serious  
ironic |
| Asks you to identify **vocabulary in context** | • As it is used in the passage, the term ______ is best defined as  
• The phrase ______ is used in the passage to mean  
• In the passage, the word ______ means  
• The author uses the phrase ______ to describe  

| Asks you to identify **technique or style** | • Which of the following best describes the development of the passage?  
• In presenting the argument, the author does all of the following EXCEPT  
• The relationship between the first two paragraphs can be described as  

**TERMS:**  
abstract  
analogy  
colloquial  
generalization  
narrative  
concrete  
argumentative  
expository  
direct  
witty  
explanatory  
antithesis  
persuasive  
personal  
rhetorical |