ELT ARCHIVE

Supporting English Learning Through Tests

Practical suggestions for learners teachers and families

Use tests as opportunities to learn

ELT Archive tests can support short classroom activities, unit revision and practice at home. The aim is more than increasing the number of correct answers: help learners recognise what they understand and decide what to work on next.

Set small and flexible goals

Adjust the amount of work to the learner's age, attention and energy that day. A few questions, or half of a ten-question test, may be enough for a young learner to begin with. There is no need to complete the same number every day. Take a break when tiredness or frustration increases.

Understand the question first

Read the instructions and identify what you need to do: choose a word, complete a conversation or find information in a text. Read both sides of a gap. Consider every option before choosing the first answer that seems suitable.

Use context and evidence

In dialogues, choose a response that fits the speaker's question and purpose. In reading tasks, find the sentence that supports your answer. An option is not correct simply because it repeats a word from the text. If a word is unfamiliar, first try to work out its meaning from the surrounding language.

Return to difficult questions

If you are stuck, mark the question and move on. Read it again later. Before finishing, check unanswered questions, question numbers and the options you have selected.

Use the answer key to learn

Where possible, let learners complete their own attempt before checking the key. Ask "Why did you choose this answer?" and "Why does the other option not fit?" Discuss guesses even when they are correct. Identify the reason for an error, revisit the relevant vocabulary or language point, and try a similar question later.

Family Support and the Pleasure of Learning Together

Support may come from a parent, an older sibling, another relative or a caregiver. You do not need to be an expert in English. Providing a calm space, listening and encouraging curiosity are valuable ways to help.

Help while leaving room to think

Sit beside young learners and explain the instructions if necessary. Give them time to think instead of immediately supplying the answer. Look back at the coursebook together when needed. If you are unsure, say “Let’s find out together.” Follow the teacher’s instructions when a task is intended to be completed independently.

Notice effort in specific ways

Try comments such as “You read the question again and found a clue in the text” or “You tried a different way when it was difficult.” Look beyond the score and avoid comparisons with other children.

Keep shared time free from conditions

Playing a favourite game, taking a walk or reading a story can be enjoyable time together. Avoid presenting these activities as rewards that must be earned by completing a set number of tests or getting enough answers right. Let children feel that your attention and affection remain when they struggle.

Some words you could use

“I can see the effort you are putting into learning English. I noticed that you tried again when it was difficult. Thank you for working with me. Let’s do something you enjoy together now.”

A brief note for teachers

Choose tests that fit the unit and your learners’ needs; use selected questions when appropriate. Use common errors to plan short revision activities. These multiple-choice tasks do not show every aspect of a learner’s English and can be used alongside speaking, listening and writing activities.