

New England Common Assessment Program: Science Test Taking Strategies

Tips for Teachers to Share with Students – All Grades

Doing your BEST on a Test –

1. **Be ready.** Test takers should be well rested and have a good breakfast or lunch (well balanced), before the testing window.
2. **Know how the test is scored.** In some tests, a wrong answer counts for more points off than a question that is skipped or left blank. For tests like this – only answer questions that you know the answer to. In other tests, like the NECAP Science Assessment, points are only given for questions with answers. *So no question should go un-answered.* If you skip a question, you have no chance to earn any points for the question.
3. **Take your time.** As long as you have plenty of time - use it. Take time to read questions thoroughly. If you are struggling with a question, make your best guess and move on to the next. Before you move on, make note of the question you need to re-check. (Examples: Circle the number of the question on your answer sheet or make note of the question number on your scratch paper.) When you have finished this section, as long as the session is still going on, return to take a second look at the questions you noted.
4. **Know how much time you have.** For most tests, you are given a specific amount of time to complete the test. For the NECAP Science Assessment, there is plenty of time for students to work on each test session. If you usually take extra time doing tests, make sure you and your teacher arrange for additional time before the test session begins.
5. **Use support or reference materials – if they are permitted on the test.** These could include a reference sheet, map, table, word bank, or other support materials. If the people who wrote the test think specific support materials will be helpful, use those materials for questions in that content area. On the NECAP Science Test at grades 8 & 11, a reference sheet is provided. The reference sheet may include information like formulas and provide supplemental information for several questions. For some questions a Word Bank is included. Please refer to the word bank as needed. **DO NOT USE ANY MATERIALS NOT PERMITTED.**
6. **Use Scratch paper** - if allowed - to work out math problems or draw a diagram to help you understand the concept. For the NECAP Science Assessment, any scratch paper used will be collected – so please put your name on the scratch paper. **NO** Score, however, will be given for anything on the scratch paper.
7. **Make sure your answer is on the answer sheet.** No credit is given for work found on your scratch paper or in your test booklet. Make sure your answer gets onto the answer sheet. For constructed responses, make sure your answer is completely within the answer box. Information outside the boxed area will not be scored.

Question Types

Multiple Choice (MC) Questions –

- Read the question – underline or circle words of importance
- Read (Look at) any non-text features such as pictures, diagrams or graphs that may be part of the question.
- Look at the four possible answers; are there one or two you know are wrong? Cross out the letters in the test booklet. (Make sure you can still read all the choices in case you change your mind about what is wrong.) When you can get rid of two possible choices, you have increased your odds of getting the right answer.
- Once you have selected your answer and marked it on your answer sheet. Read the question one last time. Does your answer still make sense?
- Make sure all extra marks on your answer booklet – other than your answers – are removed. The answers for MC questions will be scanned electronically. Extra marks may throw off your scores.

Constructed Response (CR) Questions –

- Read the entire question. How many parts are there to answer? (If there is a *part a* and a *part b* you have two things to answer.)
- Underline or circle words like **explain**, **describe**, or **use data**. These give you clues as to the type and depth of answer that is expected.
- Read (look at) any pictures, data, or materials provided.
- Consider if a **table**, **graph**, **bulleted list** or **labeled diagram** could help you answer the questions more completely. These elements are permitted in CR responses to help support your answers. Make sure any graphs, tables, or diagrams you have created contain labels and titles.
- Fit your answer in the space provided on your answer sheet.
- **DO NOT LEAVE A CR QUESTION BLANK.** Since CR questions are worth four points, it is important that you try to answer each question. A score of 1 or 2 is always better than a score of zero. Try to write a relevant answer even if you can not answer all parts of the question.

Inquiry Tasks (IT) –

The Inquiry Task on the NECAP Science Assessment contains 7 or 8 questions which are related to the scenario (story).

- The questions will be short answer (two points) and three point CR questions.
- There will be some elements to graph. Make sure you label and title your graph.
- You may use tables, graphs, bulleted lists, or labeled diagrams to help explain your answers. Make sure any graphs, tables, or diagrams you have created contain labels and titles.
- If you complete an investigation as part of the Inquiry Task, make sure the data from your investigation gets transferred to your student answer booklet.
- Since several questions may be related, do not skip questions. Try your best to answer each question.
- Fit your answer in the space provided on your answer sheet.

Non-Text Elements

Graph Elements

- Select a graph which best shows the data.
- Make sure that any graph you use or make has a title.
- Make sure you label the elements which are being graphed. Labels must fit in the answer box
- Use (and label) a scale for the relationship.
- Include a key if needed.
- Graph the independent (not changing) variable on the **x axis** and the dependant (changing) variable on the **y axis**. Example: when graphing change in temperature over ten minutes...the time is the x (not changed) and the temperature is the y axis (changing)

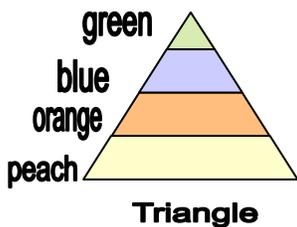
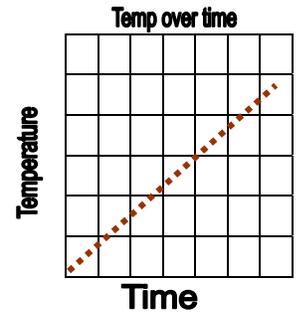


Diagram Elements

- If you use a diagram or drawing give it a title (above or below).
- Label any pertinent parts.
- Make sure the labels are connected – in some way (by a line or by where you have put the label) – to the part they are labeling.
- Use words and phrases to help complete your answer.

Bulleted List Elements

- Use bullets to make parts of your list stand out
- Label or title your list so that the person reading it will know why you have used it.
- Leave room for additional phrases or sentences to complete your answer

Table/Chart Elements

- Organize your information using a table or a chart
- Label the Table or Chart
- For both tables and charts, make sure columns have headers (Labels).
- In tables, be sure to label the rows.

Table Title

	Column a	Column b	Column c	Column d
Row a				
Row b				
Row c				

Table Example
←

Red and Blue Things

Example of a Chart →

Red Things	Blue Things
Apples	Sky
Fire Trucks	Ocean (sometimes)
Red Sox Shirts	Eyes
Valentine Hearts	Blueberries