

Tobin 2019 Test Prep Tip #1: *Check in the Passage (Build the Habit)*

Basic Rationale:

- *One of the main reasons that test-takers miss questions, from elementary students all the way up to college graduates taking the LSAT or GRE, is that they do not go back to the passage/chart/etc. to find the answer to a question before trying to answer it, when **this is possible**, and they misremember a detail or are drawn to a wrong but good-sounding multiple-choice answer that may connect to something from a different part of the passage/chart or something else they read or heard somewhere.*

Why don't test-takers check in the passage?

- Sometimes people skip checking as a **conscious choice** because they think they get no benefit from the task, or not enough to justify the time it takes.

* This is **poor reasoning: checking is more than worth the time spent**

- Regarding time, so long as test-takers have decent scanning ability (to be covered in a later tip), checking an answer in the passage **enables test-takers to power through answer choices with speed that more than makes up for the time spent checking.**

- Stopping after reading each question to check in the passage beneficially **splits up the tough brain work** test-takers are doing

- When test-takers with adequate reading comprehension check in the passage and confirm their initial thinking on a question, this checking **gives test-takers a boost of confident energy** that helps them maintain focus and stamina throughout the test.

- Often students just have a **habit of not checking** and have a hard time adjusting their habit to check when they really need to to answer a question correctly.

* **This can be especially true with strong students** who are accustomed to taking tests they find easy and may have even developed pride in their ability to get answers right without checking.

* **Students with low confidence may opine** (usually incorrectly) **that it does not matter** whether they check or not.

Rx:

- **To build a strong habit in students of always checking in the passage:**

* Continue and strengthen what you likely are doing already to have students refer regularly to text when developing opinions, such as having students mark up text and provide quotes and page #'s to justify their thinking.

* **In addition, start including (if you aren't already) and regularly include in tests this spring open-response and multiple-choice questions that can EASILY be answered correctly by checking in the passage, but that can practically ONLY be answered correctly by checking in the passage, even by strong students.**

- Use student performance on these questions as formative assessment regarding checking-passage habits (for further intervention, as needed, such as related to scanning ability) and as a springboard to discussions about test-taking strategy in general.