

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	iii
<b>Reading Skills for Tests</b>	
I. Vocabulary .....	1
II. Understand the Main Idea .....	15
III. Answer Multiple Choice Questions .....	29
IV. Give Written Answers .....	41
V. Use Clues to Infer Answers .....	58
VI. Use Your Thoughts and Feelings to Infer Answers.....	71
VII. Understanding Analogies.....	87
<b>Math Skills for Tests</b>	
VIII. Estimate the Correct Answer .....	98
IX. Solve Complicated Word Problems .....	105
X. Different Units of Measure in Word Problems .....	133
XI. Estimation in Word Problems .....	155
XII. Understand Charts.....	173
XIII. Understand Patterns.....	184
<b>Review</b> .....	199
<b>Answer Key</b> .....	213

## INTRODUCTION

*Thinking Skills for Tests: Upper Elementary\** teaches test-taking skills that will help students in Grades 3-5 to perform their best on standardized tests. Usually students prepare for standardized tests by taking practice tests, but without explicit instruction in test-taking skills, time spent taking practice tests can be counterproductive. Practice tests alone may only reinforce ineffective test-taking habits. *Thinking Skills for Tests* develops effective but often overlooked ways to think about the common parts of almost all standardized tests.

### Students can learn to:

- consider each answer choice in a way that will increase the likelihood of giving a correct answer rather than an impressionistic wrong answer that might *seem* correct.
- expect that they will not understand every detail of what they read in reading comprehension passages.
- understand the main idea of a passage, regardless of whether or not they understand many of the details, and effectively answer questions based on what they *do* know.
- preview questions in a way that research shows can improve test performance.
- give short, written answers to questions that will be clear to any reader, even one who is unfamiliar with test content, which will increase the quality of written answers.
- make inferences about what they read on a test or in a passage.
- estimate answers to math problems in order to check their work and also know when it's appropriate to use estimation to give answers to test questions.
- translate different types of mathematical word problems into math problems that lead to the correct solution. This process involves discerning those parts of word problems that are necessary for finding the solution, using the correct math operation, and checking answers.
- appreciate the patterns involved in both visual and numerical test questions.

\**Thinking Skills for Tests: Upper Elementary* was prepared following ethical guidelines provided by the National Council on Measurement in Education. The content bears no strong resemblance to any actual assessment or specific items from any assessment. Students who practice with *Thinking Skills for Tests* may perform better on standardized tests than they would without this practice, but their test scores will not rise beyond their actual ability levels.

*Thinking Skills for Tests* is a systematic method of practicing critical thinking in a test-taking format that can build a student's confidence and skill knowledge. It is not designed to be scored or used as an indicator of academic or test performance.

## Level of Difficulty

*Thinking Skills for Tests: Upper Elementary* is appropriate for students who have, at least, completed most of a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade curriculum. Test-taking skills are presented and practiced. Optional material is available for advanced students who would like to practice their test-taking skills with more difficult test questions after completing all the skills. Advanced students should not skip ahead to the advanced sections because this will prevent them from learning the test-taking skills.

## Work in the Order That the Chapters Are Presented

It is recommended that students work through the chapters in the order in which they are presented because the material is cumulative. Basic test-taking skills learned in the first chapter, *Vocabulary*, are used in almost all of the subsequent sections. Also, reading comprehension skills are applied to mathematical word problems. The most important sections that contain material used in subsequent sections are *Vocabulary*, *Answer Multiple Choice Questions*, *Give Written Answers*, and *Solve Complicated Word Problems*. When students learn in the order in which the material is presented, they gain the full benefit of using this book.

## Acknowledgement

Many thanks to Claire Tempelman for sharing her editorial skill and guidance.

## II. Understand the Main Idea

Everything you read has a **main idea**.

The **main idea** is the *meaning* of what you read.

On a test, if you are asked, “What was the paragraph mostly about?” you are being asked about the paragraph’s main idea.

Main ideas are explained by *details*. Details are NOT the main idea, but they tell you more about the main idea.

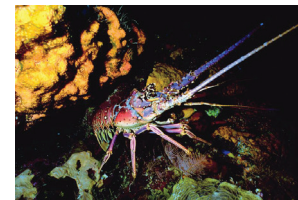
Do you think that you have to understand every detail of what you read on a test? Well, you do not! All you have to understand is the main idea. You should not worry if you do not understand every detail about what you read! The exercises below will help you understand more about main ideas.



### A. See the Main Idea in Pictures

These exercises will show you that you can find a main idea when you look at a **group** of pictures. They will also show you that you don’t have to worry if you don’t understand every detail and fact about what is in the pictures. You may not know exactly what all the pictures are, but you will still be able to find the main idea.

#### Exercise 1



Think about how you would describe the group of pictures seen above to a friend. If you had to tell your friend the main idea that describes all the pictures, what would it be?

Write the main idea: \_\_\_\_\_

- If you tell one of your friends about the group of pictures seen above, you probably would NOT say, “I saw a fish, two dolphins, a shark, and a spiny lobster.” Those are all details.
- You also probably don’t know the exact name for each of those details. For example, you don’t need to know that the creature in the last picture is called a “spiny lobster” in order to understand the main idea.
- The main idea is that the pictures show “ocean life,” or “creatures that swim.” Any answer that describes animals and plants that live in the ocean is correct. As long as you described the meaning of the **group** of pictures, you have stated the main idea.

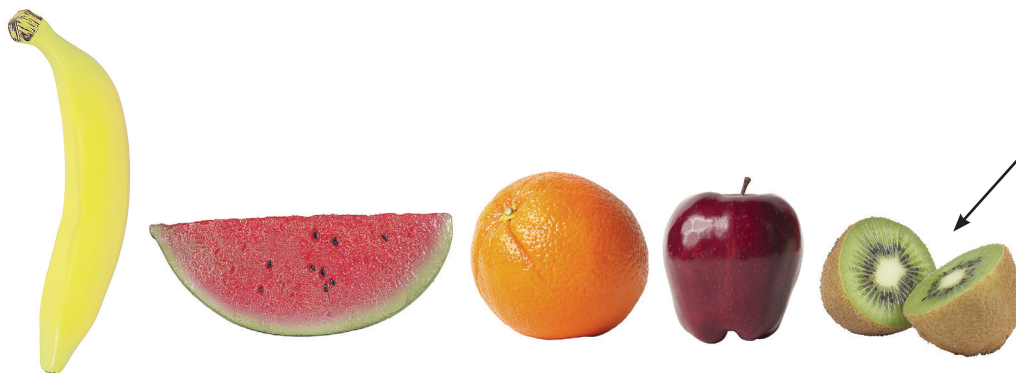
Write the main idea for each group of pictures.

**Exercise 2**



Write the main idea: \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 3**



Do you know what this is? You don't have to know! You can understand the main idea without knowing what this is. (It is called a "kiwi fruit.")

Write the main idea: \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 4**



Write the main idea: \_\_\_\_\_

## B. Understand the Main Idea in a Paragraph

Just as a group of pictures can have a main idea, a paragraph is a group of sentences with a main idea. Every paragraph has a main idea. Most paragraphs also have details that support the main idea.

The next exercises will show you how to write a paragraph with a main idea and details that support the main idea.

### Exercise 5



Below is a paragraph that a student (Ashley) wrote to describe the group of pictures above.



There are many types of ocean life. When most people think about ocean life, they usually think about fish. Mammals, such as dolphins, also call the ocean home. Plants, sharks, and lobsters also are part of the diverse group of living things in the ocean.

Ashley starts with a sentence that states the main idea.

There are many types of ocean life.

Then she goes on to describe details that support the main idea.

When most people think about ocean life, they usually think about fish. Mammals, such as dolphins, also call the ocean home. Plants, sharks, and lobsters also are part of the diverse group of living things in the ocean.

## Exercise 6

---



Below is a paragraph that Ashley wrote to describe the group of pictures above.

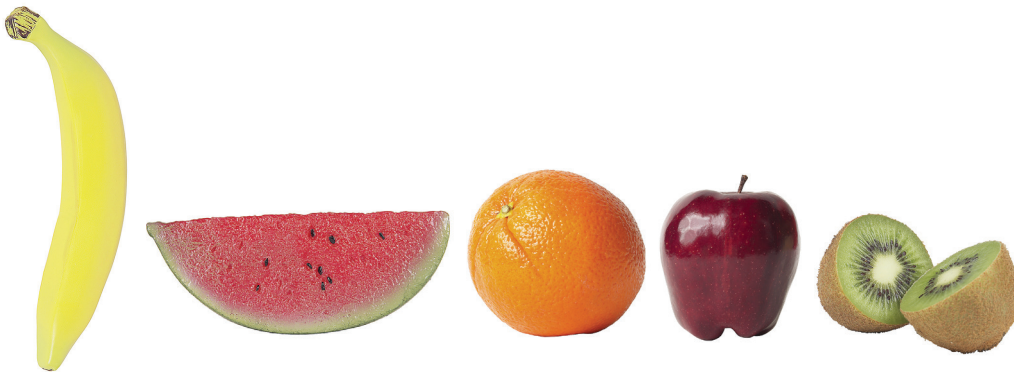
Most people write by using a notebook with a pencil or pen.  
However, there are many ways to write. More and more often,  
people are writing on computers.

This time, Ashley's **second** sentence states the main idea. The main idea is that there are many ways to write. Her other sentences have details that help support the main idea.

Most people write by using a notebook with a pencil or pen.  
However, there are many ways to write. More and more often,  
people are writing on computers.

## Exercise 7

---



When you were asked to write the main idea about the group of pictures seen above, you probably wrote "fruits" or "things to eat" as the main idea. Whichever you chose as the main idea is fine.

## V. Use Clues to Infer Answers

When you answer questions about what you have read on a test, many times you will find the answers directly in the passage. So far, that's what you've been practicing in this book.

However, there are times you will **not** find answers directly in the passage. Instead, you will have to infer the answers. To **infer** is to draw your own conclusions from clues in the passage in order to answer the questions.

This exercise will show you the difference between finding answers directly in the passage and inferring answers by using clues.

**Step 1:** Read the questions (1 and 2 that are below the passage).

**Step 2:** Read the passage once to understand the main idea. Underline important details.

### Exercise 1

#### Women in Space

In 1961, an astronaut from Russia named Yuri Gagarin was the first person to travel in outer space. People around the world were amazed when they learned that a person traveled in outer space. One ten year old girl from America who heard this news was Sally Ride. This news made Sally wish that she could become an astronaut one day. Just as space travel is amazing, it also is amazing when children grow up to accomplish their dreams.



**Step 3:** Reread the underlined details to help you answer the questions.

1. Write the year that the first person traveled in outer space. \_\_\_\_\_

To answer question 1, you can look at the passage and find the answer directly. You may already have underlined the answer. The correct answer is 1961.

2. What did Sally Ride probably do when she grew up?  
\_\_\_\_\_

- a. Restate the question.
- b. Then add specific information from the passage.



To answer question 2, you cannot find the answer directly in the passage. You need to **infer** the answer using **clues** from the passage.

There are three clues in the passage. Here's how to use those clues to infer the answer:

**Clue:** "This news made Sally wish that she could become an astronaut one day."

**Inference:** When Sally was a child, she wanted to become an astronaut.

**Clue:** "Just as space travel is amazing, it also is amazing when children grow up to accomplish their dreams."

**Inference:** Sally may have grown up to become an astronaut.

**Clue:** Look at the **photo** next to the passage.

**Inference:** The woman in the photo is dressed like a NASA astronaut. Maybe that's Sally Ride.

Using clues from the passage, you can infer the answer. The best answer is:

When Sally Ride grew up, she probably became an astronaut.

Some kids are nervous when they need to infer answers. Here's what one student (Scott) said about inferring answers:



"I make inferences about what will happen when I read for fun. Now when I take a test I know I can use clues from the passage to infer the best answer."

To answer some questions, you **must** infer answers because you may not find those answers directly in the passage. To infer, you need to find clues, put those clues together, and decide on the best answer.

## Guided Practice

Follow the steps below to practice making inferences.

**Step 1:** Read the questions (3, 4, and 5 on the next page).

**Step 2:** Read the passage once to understand the main idea. Underline important details.

**Step 3:** Reread the underlined details to help you answer the questions.

### Exercise 2

---

#### Kwan's Birthday Wish



The candles on Kwan's birthday cake were lit. Kwan knew that he would have to make a wish soon. He thought that he might wish for a new video game. However, he really did not want a new video game. He wondered if there was something else that could be his wish. To help him think of another wish that might be better than a video game, he said to his guests, "Help me out by telling me things that you want for your birthdays."

Kwan's mother said, "That is very kind of you, but it is your birthday, and your wish."

"Yeah mom," explained Kwan, "it's my wish, but I'm not sure what to wish, and if I hear more choices, maybe then I can make a really good wish."

Kwan's friend Jason said, "You should wish for a longer lunch time in school because you never finish your lunch."

Kwan laughed and said, "Is that what you would wish for on your birthday Jason?"

"No," answered Jason, "I would wish for a kitten."

"But I already have a cat!" exclaimed Kwan, who was looking at the candles burning and losing his patience.

Abe, another friend from school suggested, "Just wish for a super power, like being able to fly."

"No way," argued Kwan. "Even though I'm not happy with the wish I'm thinking of, at least it's a wish that can come true," and blew out his candles before it was too late.

3. What did Kwan's mother probably think that Kwan was going to do when he asked, "Help me out by telling me things that you want for your birthdays."
- She thought that Kwan would give his birthday wish to someone else.
  - She thought that Kwan would wish for a video game.
  - She thought that Kwan would wish for a kitten.
  - She thought that Kwan didn't want to make a wish.

Cross out wrong answers, and then choose the best answer.

**Clue:** "Kwan's mother said, 'That is very kind of you, but it is your birthday, and your wish.'"

4. Why did Kwan ask to hear other kids' wishes?
- Because he didn't have any wishes of his own.
  - Because he did not like his own wish, and he thought that someone else's wish would be something that he would want for himself.
  - Because he wanted to know if other kids also wanted a video game.
  - Because it was not really his birthday.

**Clue:** "He thought that he might wish for a new video game. However, he really did not want a new video game. He wondered if there was something else that could be his wish. To help him think of another wish that might be better than a video game, he said to his guests, 'Help me out by telling me things that you want for your birthdays.'"

5. In the end, just before he blew out the candles, what was probably Kwan's wish?
- a kitten
  - a super power
  - a video game
  - the ability to fly

**Clue:** "He thought that he might wish for a new video game. However, he really did not want a new video game. He wondered if there was something else that could be his wish."

**Clue:** " 'But I already have a cat!' said Kwan, who was looking at the candles burning and losing his patience."

**Clue:** " 'No way,' said Kwan. 'Even though I'm not happy with the wish I'm thinking of, at least it's a wish that can come true,' and blew out his candles before it was too late."