

Frequently Asked Questions

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www.homeschoolertests.com

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1. Who has to test their home schooler?

Under North Carolina law, <http://www.ncdnpe.org/>, each home school registered with the Department of Non-Public Education (DNPE) must have a nationally standardized achievement test administered annually to each student at least age 7 and not yet age 16 (unless applying for an NC driver's license). If your child starts the school year at 16 and is listed with DNPE you need to test him/her. To learn more about other state's homeschool laws refer to the Laws section of the Home School Legal Defense Association website at <http://www.hslda.org/laws/>

2. Why should my child be tested?

- Home school parents who work closely with their children every day usually know quite accurately where their children are academically.
- Standardized tests can affirm both your child's learning progress and your teaching ability. An objective evaluation can encourage teacher and student and also provide confirmation of your success to other family members, friends, and the state, where required.
- Standardized tests might also point out weaknesses that you may not have noticed. You can then work to improve in these areas.
- It is NC State law to test a home schooler each year if the student is at least 7 years old and not yet 16 years old or doesn't have their license and wants to apply for one.

3. When do I need to test?

The NCDNPE (North Carolina Department of Non-Public Education, <http://www.ncdnpe.org/>) webpage states that tests should be ordered by February 1 each year. This is not a law but a good recommendation is to start even sooner in lining up your test and date. WJ III administrators' calendars fill up very quickly. Though the NCDNPE also states that home schoolers should test in the spring and specifically during the same week of your choice between March 1 and April 15, they

accept scores from any month of the year. (WJ III is normed to any month of the year. Iowa has norms for fall, midyear, and spring.)

4. Which subjects need to be tested?

The test must be nationally standardized and involve the subject areas of grammar, reading, spelling and mathematics. Officials at the DNPE recommend that middle and high school students also have social studies and science evaluated whenever applicable.

5. Who does NCDNPE want to administer the test?

The NCDNPE recommends (it is not law) that the test not be administered or scored by relatives, guardians, or anyone living in the same household as the student. They also state that:

- An educational institution/organization is preferred.
- Machine-scoring is most ideal. (Always allow at least eight weeks to receive test results if the test is machine scored.)

6. Who can give the test as per the test publishers?

- Woodcock-Johnson III can only be given by a specially trained administrator.
- Iowa requires the administrator to have a BA degree.
- California Achievement Test can be given by parents.
- Stanford requires a proof of college diploma, BA, and two or more NONRELATIVES must be tested simultaneously with the tester's relative in EACH TEST-LEVEL GROUP.
- PASS can be given by parents for grades 3-8.

7. What do I do with the test results?

Records of the test results must be retained at the school for at least one year and made available to the DNPE when requested. After you have home schooled 3 years the DNPE will ask you to voluntarily send in a copy of your scores and attendance form. This is not mandatory. As per Sharon Henderson on Spiceline: "NCHE recommends you participate in the voluntary program. The results sent to DNPE sit in boxes until some volunteer home school mom comes in to file it. There is no team of social workers, teachers or anyone else who pours over the results. ALL results are destroyed after 3 years. The kinds of test that we give (nationally normed, standardized tests) are not pass or fail tests. Legislators, who DO NOT KNOW the freedom in our law, ask DNPE what percentage of home schoolers 'report'. Because ALL public schools report test scores each year legislators think ALL home schoolers are supposed to report. When legislators hear that only a small percentage of home schoolers send in their information they think, not knowing our law, that we are in violation. Thus, legislators think we are not in compliance and are therefore not accountable to anyone so, participating in the voluntary inspection by mail is in your best interest!"

8. Which standardized test should I use?

- Nationally normed standardized
- As of September 14, 2007, the DNPE includes these approved tests on their website:

1. Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement (WJ III Nu is the latest version):

The WJ must be given by a specially trained administrator, usually in their home. It is oral/written format and usually takes 1 to 1.5 hours to complete. An immediate computerized report is given and usually a short consultation. The WJ also has a cognitive processing battery which can be given by someone properly licensed or working under the supervision of someone licensed. This is the only test in the world that has had the achievement and cognitive batteries co-normed. (Therefore, you can assess whether a child is working up to, beyond, or below their potential. The cognitive battery can give an IQ score and highlight how the child learns/processes best.) Together, both batteries are comprised of 42+ tests.

2. Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) for grades K-8 and also called Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) for Grades 9-12:

The Iowa gives a lot of sub-scores, so you can see more clearly how your child did on each different subject. The Iowa Test publishers require someone with a B.A. to administer the Iowa test. It is easily administered and provides the required information for a very reasonable cost. Many large support groups provide this test. Many public school districts in NC have used this test to assess students' progress. The complete battery takes 2.5 - 4.5 hours for grades K-2; 5.5 hours for grades 3-8 and 4.5 hours for grades 9-12.

3. **California Achievement Test (CAT):**

The CAT can usually be given by anyone. The CAT has a survey version which takes about 4 hours. The complete battery takes about 6-8 hours.

4. **Stanford Achievement Test:**

Stanford tests have some rules about who can give their tests, and therefore these tests can be more difficult for an individual family to obtain. You must have a college degree, and have two or more unrelated children take the test with your child when it is administered. Many private schools use the Stanford. Approximate testing times are 3-5 hours over 3 days for K5-grade 3, 5.5 hours over 3 days for grades 4-8, and 3.5 hours over 2 days for grades 9-12.

5. **PASS Test:**

Personalized Achievement Summary System Test (PASS), a norm-referenced test especially developed for home schoolers in grades 3-8 by Hewitt. Results show both overall achievement and performance in each of the three subjects, which are reading, math and language. The PASS is an un-timed test. Testing twice a year is recommended to obtain a more accurate measure of achievement. You must give a placement test before the actual achievement test. It is not truly nationally normed but the states of Alaska, New York, and North Carolina have officially approved the PASS Test for purposes of state reporting.

9. **What differences exist between the tests in question 8 (above)?**

The format of the tests are different. Tests #2 thru #5 (listed for question 8) are multiple choice and fill-in-the-bubble format.

10. **What is the cost difference between the tests?**

The cost difference between the IOWA, CAT, Stanford, or PASS and the Woodcock-Johnson is the amount of labor involved administering and scoring the test as well as the training and experience of the test provider. In addition, immediate results are received with WJ III and usually a short consultation is given along with the report. A WJ III administrator will be able to answer questions about your child's scores as well as provide insight into their performance based on observations made during the test. An administrator who also home schools should be able to provide some insight into curriculum choices and planning as well.

11. **What is the difference between the Woodcock Johnson III (WJ III) and the bubble type tests?**

One significant difference between the WJ III and bubble type tests is the range of difficulty of test items used and the generation of Grade Equivalency (GE) scores. Multiple choice, grade specific tests (like the IOWA and CAT) are composed of items within a limited range of difficulty. WJ III administrators give students questions up to any grade level that they can accomplish correctly within certain ranges. Therefore, the WJ III GE score better reflects what the student can accomplish. In addition, a Relative Mastery Index predicts the student's success with grade level material. These scores and others aid the parent in deciding which areas may need improvement and which areas are accelerated for that student.

12. **Why Choose the Woodcock Johnson III Achievement Test?**

This test is ideal for these situations:

- The child's other test scores are extremely high or low for grade level or they do not reflect true performance.

- The child is very young, his attention wanders, is easily distracted or he has trouble with timed tests.
- The child is reading very well or very poorly for his age.
- The parents feel the need for outside input regarding their child's achievement level and/or curriculum choices.
- The parents needs or prefers to get test scores immediately and have them explained thoroughly.
- The child appears to be struggling in certain areas and a more thorough evaluation for learning disabilities is desired.
- The parents desire to have the achievement scores compared with a cognitive/IQ score.

13. Why choose the Iowa Achievement Test?

- Iowa test score reports give more categories than the WJIII basic achievement package for understanding a student's academic performance. Science, Social Studies and sources of information scores are given in Iowa reports.
- Iowa permits group testing. (Grades 3-8 and 9-12 can be given together using The Iowa Tests.)
- The Iowa format is similar to college entrance exams formats.
- Iowa tests are less expensive.
- Iowa tests can be administered in the student's familiar environment by a parent or someone with a bachelor's degree.
- Iowa tests are more widely given in public and private schools across the nation. Iowa scores are accepted for eligibility into the National Honor Society.

14. Should I test with the Iowa or Stanford achievement test?

Both of these tests are top-rated, nationally standardized tests. Both of them evaluate thinking skills, provide thorough results, and are designed to accomplish the same purposes. Neither is more "difficult" than the other. Whichever test you choose, there are advantages to using the same test from year to year or at least 2 years in a row.

- Stanford tests evaluate listening skills through grade 8, Iowa through grade 2.
- Iowa permits a wider grade range of students to be tested at the same time. Iowa can be administered to grades 3-8 together and grades 9-12 together, while with Stanford you can group grades 4-8 and 9-12.
- Stanford tests require more stringent criteria for the administrators to meet.
- Stanford usually takes longer to administer.
- Stanford is usually slightly more expensive.

15. How do I choose the grade level of the test?

Most of the time it is prudent to choose the test level based on what grade the child would be in if in traditional school. If the child is working above or below grade level in a majority of subjects, then you might choose to use that grade level to get the most accurate and helpful results. In order to make the most practical use of the scores you should not test above your child's reading level. In NC, parents choose the grade level of the test for their children.

16. Where do I get a nationally standardized test for my home schooler?

Debbie Thompson, M.A.

Triangle Education Assessments

The Iowa Tests Distributor (achievement, cognitive, practice)

Woodcock-Johnson III Administrator

Interest Explorer - Career Test

Ph 919-387-7004, Cell 919-274-7495, Email preferred:

debthompson@nc.rr.com

www.HomeSchoolerTests.com

Triangle Education Assessments (www.HomeSchoolerTests.com) offers The Iowa Tests (ITBS and ITED) for grades K-12 in complete battery format (\$38-\$50, depending on time of year), with group discounts available. Iowa Test administrators must have a bachelor's degree. Discounted group rates are available. TEA also offers the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement (WJ III) for PreK-college (usually \$90). The WJ III, an individual test, is offered primarily in the Raleigh, NC area. TEA has offered the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Cognitive Abilities in the past but currently gives referrals for those or offers the CogAT. **Other Test Suppliers:** The Division of Non-Public Education (DNPE) has a list of other places to purchase tests at their website: <http://www.ncdnpe.org/hhh113.htm>

REMEMBER: Don't wait until the last minute to order your tests! It takes time to order them, receive them, give them, and get the results returned.

17. What do the terms on the reports mean?

These scores usually appear most standardized achievement tests:

RAW: Raw score - The number of questions a student gets right.

SS: Developmental Standard Score: This number describes a student's location on an achievement continuum. The scale corresponds to typical performances of grade groups on each test at certain times of the year. They have no built-in meaning. To interpret the SS, the values associated with typical performance in each grade must be used as reference points. These numbers are used to compute other statistics.

GE: Grade Equivalent is a number that gives the student's location on an achievement continuum and describes performance in terms of grade level and month. For example, if a fourth grader scores 5.6 on a test, his/her score is like the one a student at the end of the 6th month of 5th grade would likely score. It means the student scored as well as the average student in the sixth month of the fifth grade would have scored. (High achieving students typically gain more than 10 months in a year.) These scores are particularly useful for measuring individual growth from one year to the next. It measures a student's developmental level, and IS NOT a prescription for grade placement. A high GE or low GE is mainly a sign of exceptional or low performance. (Use percentile ranks to analyze strengths and weaknesses or standing within a group.) GE scores are best suited to estimate a student's developmental status or year-to-year growth.

NS: National Stanine: This statistic is a coarse grouping of percentile ranks or normalized standard scores that range from 1 to 9 and have an average value of 5. They are less precise measures of student achievement than percentile ranks but are convenient to use to identify areas of strength and weakness. They do not describe a student's developmental level or measure growth.

PR: 1-3 4-10 11-22 23-39 40-59 60-76 77-88 89-95 96-99

S: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

NCE: Normal Curve Equivalent: Normalized standard scores. They have a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 21.06. They range from 1 to 99. They must be converted to other scores like percentile ranks or stanines to be used.

NPR: National Percentile Rank: These percentiles show a student's standing within the group of students in the same grade who were tested at the same time of year during the national standardization. These are especially useful for profile analysis and determining the areas of relative strength and weakness for an individual student. A percentile rank of 72 means the student scored better than 72 percent of the other children in the same grade in the norming sample. Percentile ranks range from 1 to 99 and are less useful than grade equivalents for estimating or monitoring growth. A student's percentile rank is a score that shows the percent of students in a particular group that got lower raw scores on a test than the student did.

18. Did you know that in NC...

- Some tests can be administered by parents.
- The parent determines the grade of the child.
- Home educated children do NOT have to take the EOG test, computer test, or NC tests.
- WJ can be used to register your child for TIP - Duke's gifted program.
- Only scores in reading/language art and math testing are required.
- You may order an achievement test from the test companies provided above. Not all suppliers have the same requirements for test administrators. For example BJUP has more restrictions than other suppliers for the same test.
- Testing does not have to be done at a 'testing site'.
- Testing does not have to be done in a group setting.
- Testing does not have to be done in your support group or local public school.
- Studies have shown that students do better being tested in familiar surroundings, and for home schoolers, that would be home.

19. How can I prepare my child for testing?

- If you are concerned about testing, consider looking at some test prep materials. The Scoring High series (which prepares students for a particular test) and the Spectrum workbooks (which are more generic, not geared to a particular test, and less expensive) are popular choices. (Both are available from Rainbow Resource, and Spectrum is sometimes available at bookstores like Borders and/or Barnes & Noble.) These might help a child who has never have taken a test before understand what it's going to be like, so they are comfortable emotionally with the testing.
- Having your child see and maybe work through some test prep materials can not only help your child be comfortable with testing, it can de-mystify the testing for you, too. Most of these tests are pretty much just multiple-choice worksheets.
- You might want to explain to your children that this is something they must do to follow the law; it will show them the things they do best; they should try to do their best, but not worry too much about it. You can tell them that some questions will probably be very easy for them while some might be too hard for them. They should not spend too much time on the difficult questions but should give them their best guess.

20. Checklist for the Day of the Test

Compiled from many sources including an article by Ruth Beechick, Dorothy Karman, and Gregory Cizek in the February/March 1990 Teaching Home, reprinted with permission.

- Plan ahead for a peaceful, unhurried evening and morning before the test.
- Check directions to the testing site and plan to leave and arrive early to avoid stress before the test.
- Make sure your child sleeps well, eats a healthy breakfast, and gets enough water to drink.
- Be prepared with necessary tools such as extra pencils or calculators if allowed.
- If this is your child's first test, you may want to be present in the back of the room for at least part of the time to relieve his anxiety.
- Be sure your child understands what to do if he needs to go to the bathroom during the test. Try to prevent this need.

Avoid conversations between other students and your child before a test; anxiety is contagious.

Pray with your child that he will remember what he has learned and do his best.

Thank the Lord that He promised to always be with your child and take good care of him.

21. What Test-Taking Skills Can I Teach My Child?

There are specific skills and strategies involved in taking tests that can help your child do his best.

1. Directions

- Always listen to and read the directions carefully; don't assume that you already know them. Sometimes they change only slightly, but significantly, from one section to the next.
- Ask the instructor to explain any directions that you do not understand.
- Be sure you know how and where to mark the answers, especially if they are on a separate sheet.
- Mark answers carefully and neatly, filling in the blanks completely so that it will be graded correctly.

2. Wording

- Watch out for wording such as "Which of the following is not true?" or for answers that sound or look similar.
- On a true or false question, look for the words never, always, only, best.

3. Attitude

- Relax by taking several slow, deep breaths and changing your position from time to time.
- Remember that you know a lot of information and that you are doing your best to show what you know.
- Breathe a short prayer for the Lord's help (as prayed earlier).

4. Pacing

- Since most tests are timed, don't get bogged down on a question that you can't answer or are unsure about.
- Answer the items you are sure of first. This builds confidence, and you won't miss points on easy questions by running out of time.
- Skip difficult questions and place an "x" by the number of the question in the margin on the answer sheet.
- Answer questions that you're not sure of the best you can and mark them with a "?" in the margin.
- When you have answered all the other questions, answer the questions with an "X" in the margin and recheck questions you marked with "?".

5. Helps

- If you need to, look back at the reading selection to check facts and ideas.
- Try each answer in the blank to help you decide which one sounds right.
- Remember, sometimes there are no mistakes to be found or two answers can be correct and you must choose the answer that includes them both.
- When you are not sure, eliminate answers you know are incorrect and take your best guess among the rest. Some of your guesses may be right.

6. Math

- On arithmetic test items, do a quick estimate with rounded-off numbers. This will help you avoid "silly" mistakes and may even help you locate the only possible answer.
- When you copy a math problem onto scratch paper, line up the numbers carefully and double check your copying.

___ Check math problems by reversing operations.

7. Timing

- ___ Use all the time allotted for the test; review your test if you finish early.
- ___ Recheck the directions, questions, and your answers.
- ___ Do not change answers unless they are obviously wrong.
- ___ Don't panic when students start handing in their papers. There's no reward for being the first.

22. What other tests and honor programs are available?

A. Practice Tests

1. *Test for Success* - Practice tests for all types of tests. Teacher lesson plans and student practice tests. Available through Triangle Education Assessments www.HomeSchoolerTests.com. Gr K - 8.
2. *Spectrum Test Prep Books* - achievement test prep. Available through local bookstores. Gr K - 8

B. Other tests and honor programs:

1. SAT, AP, CLEP www.collegeboard.org . You can register online for both the SAT™ and ACT, www.act.org (319)337-1270
2. PSAT, SAT, NMSQT <http://www.nationalmerit.org>. Details on how home schoolers are included in the administration of the above tests are at: <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/reg/homeschool.html>

C. Cognitive and IQ Tests

1. **The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT®) (Iowa)** available through Triangle Education Assessments: www.HomeSchoolerTests.com.
2. **Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT®)** available through BJU
3. **WJIII Cognitive** - 20 tests but only 7 are needed for IQ and takes about 45 minutes. E-mail Debbie Thompson at HomeSchoolerTests@nc.rr.com or call 919-387-7004 for referrals.

D. Career/Personality/Spiritual Gifts Assessments

1. **Interest Explorer™**: available through Triangle Education Assessments www.HomeSchoolerTests.com.
2. **Career Direct®**: Finding your niche/uncovering the vocation to which you were called. Crown Ministries/Larry Burkett Ministries. Contact: <http://www.careerdirectonline.org/> Career Pathways P.O. Box 1476 , Gainesville , GA 30503-1476 , phone: 1.800.722.1976. Best for high school aged students.
3. **The Call™: Vocational and Life Purpose Guide** <http://www.thecallonline.com/index.php>
4. **Free personaility test**: <http://www.careerdirectonline.org/>. Crown Ministries/Larry Burkett Ministries.
5. **Spiritual Gifts Inventory**: <http://www.elca.org/evangelism/assessments/spiritgifts.html> or <http://www.buildingchurch.net/g2s-i.htm>
6. **Learning Style**: <http://www.rccc-online.com/~psych/LSInventory.html> (free), <http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilswb.html> (free), <http://www.learning-styles-online.com/> (free)
7. **Multiple Intelligences**: <http://www.berghuis.co.nz/abiator/Isi/Isiframe.html> (free)

E. Talent/Honors Programs

1. **Duke Talent Identification Program (TIP)** - www.tip.duke.edu
Eligible students must have scored at the 90th percentile or above on a grade level standardized achievement, aptitude, or mental ability test or approved state criterion referenced test. Scores from either of the two most recent test administrations are acceptable; mental ability tests must be no more than two years old; and students need only qualify on one acceptable composite or sub test area.

(4th/5th graders) They also offer 7th grade program.

2. **Davidson Institute:** <http://www.ditd.org/> Score requirements:

http://www.davidsonacademy.unr.edu/Articles.aspx?ArticleID=144&NavID=1_33

3. **National Honor Society**

Must meet at least one of the following requirements as established by E.S.A.:

- ACT composite score of 26 or higher.
- PSAT score of 120 or higher (verbal/math) or 180 if total PSAT.
- SAT score of 1800 or higher.
- National Percentile Rank of 90% NPR or above on the composite/complete battery (core cannot be used) on the Iowa, Stanford, CAT, MAT or other approved nationally normed standardization achievement test (like the Woodcock-Johnson III). Check with your local chapter for which tests they accept.