

### Tips for the Scholastic High School Placement Test (HSPT)

This is a general overview of test taking tips for the HSPT intended to help students review some of the concepts and skills often included on the exam. The HSPT changes each year and therefore may focus on concepts not covered here. Students are also advised to review current math & grammar textbooks.

#### Before the exam:

- **Get Plenty of Rest & Dress Comfortably.** Go to bed early, eat a good breakfast and dress comfortably. You'll be sitting and thinking for about 3½ hours. Including breaks and the essay section, this is the length of the exam.
- **Arrive Early.** The exam begins at 8:00 am but we suggest at least arriving by 7:45 am. The exam usually finishes between 11:30 am – 12:00 pm.
- **Space your Studying.** Cramming the night before the exam is often a big mistake. The result is usually that you are tired and tense, which by itself can cause you to do poorly. You'll reinforce concepts better in your memory if you do multiple, shorter reviews over a period of time before the exam. Use flash cards to memorize concepts.
- **A free study guide with practice test questions** may be found at [www.studyguidezone.com](http://www.studyguidezone.com). To access you may type the following URL into your web browser. <http://www.studyguidezone.com/pdfs/hsptteststudyguide.pdf>
- **Don't Try to Beat the Test.** Your aim should not be to get placed above your actual comprehension level on a particular subject, but rather to perform at the level for which you are actually proficient. Your goal should simply be to do your very best. Bishop Stang uses the HSPT exam results as a part of course level placement evaluation only. We do not specify a passing score. High school is a hard enough adjustment in itself, therefore we want our students to be placed at the course level that will best allow them to meet with success.
- **Testing Accommodations.** A parent must call the Guidance Office at least 48 hours prior to the exam if a student requires any testing accommodations, such as extended time. All accommodations must be documented with and IEP or 504 Plan. Please call 508-996-5602 x425 to request testing accommodations.

#### Bring the following items with you on exam day:

- **\$20.00 exam fee** – cash or check (made out to Bishop Stang High School). Have the payment with you when you head down the hall to the exam room.
- Water or granola bar if you will need something to snack on during a break time.
- You may bring a cell phone with you. It must be powered off for the duration of the exam.

#### Leave these items at home:

- Calculators, MP3 players, watches that contain calculators, and all other electronic devices: You can't have access to any outside information while taking the exam.
- Scratch paper and books: You aren't allowed to take in paper of any kind. However, you can (and should) write in your test booklet.
- Highlighters, pens, and protractors: The only writing utensils permitted during the exam are #2 pencils which will be provided for you.

#### During the exam:

- **Keep a positive attitude.** Try to stay relaxed throughout the test. Don't worry if others finish before you; focus on the test in front of you.
- **Breaks are given in between sections.** You may quietly have a snack or take a quick bathroom break.
- **Read each question carefully.** Make sure you understand what is being asked before you try to answer. All of the questions are in a multiple-choice format. Come up with your best answer before looking at the possible answers and read all the choices before choosing your answer. Usually your first choice is the correct one.
- **Take an educated guess.** Whenever possible, narrow down your choices and make your best guess. The HSPT does not penalize for incorrect answers; it gives points for correct ones. It's better to guess than leave one blank.
- **If you can't make an educated guess, skip it and go on.** Because the test is timed, you want to keep moving at a steady pace. If you can't come up with a best guess, continue with the rest of the test and come back to it later. There may be something on another part of the test that will help you out with that question.
- **If time permits, go back and take a second look.** Take advantage of any extra time you have if you finish before time is called. Make sure that you have answered all the questions. You might want to redo a complicated math problem or reread a passage for better comprehension. Look for careless mistakes such as putting decimal points in the wrong place, misreading the directions, copying numerals incorrectly, filling in the incorrect bubble for an answer. Only change an answer if you misread or misinterpreted the question.

### The Five sections of HSPT Exam:

1. **Verbal Skills (60 questions, to be completed in 16 minutes).** Verbal Skills (VB) is focused upon synonyms, antonyms, analogies and logic. It measures how well you perform reasoning tasks involving the use of words.
2. **Quantitative Skills (52 questions, to be completed in 30 minutes).** Quantitative Skills (QT) test measures your ability to do reasoning problems involving numbers and quantities.
3. **Reading (62 questions, to be completed in 25 minutes).** Reading (RD) This test measures your ability to remember important ideas and significant details, recognize central thought or purpose, make logical inferences and understand vocabulary in context.
4. **Mathematics (64 questions, to be completed in 45 minutes).** Mathematics (MT) This test not only measures your ability to perform arithmetic operations and apply math concepts to solve problems, but also your knowledge of important concepts and ability to reason.
5. **Language (60 questions, to be completed in 25 minutes).** Language (LN) This test measures your knowledge of capitalization, punctuation, grammar, spelling, usage and composition.

### Tips for the Verbal/Language Sections.

1. **For usage questions, read the choices and check the pronouns and verbs.** If the verbs and pronouns look okay, search for problems with sentence construction or word choice.
2. **For punctuation questions,** examine the way the choices apply commas, semicolons, and colons.
3. **Memorize these punctuation rules:**
  - Use commas to separate a series of three or more items.
  - Use a comma to separate a beginning dependent clause from an independent clause.
  - Separate independent clauses in a sentence with a comma and conjunction or just a semicolon.
  - Separate nonessential elements from the rest of the sentence with commas.
  - Never use a punctuation mark to separate a verb from its complement or a preposition from its object.
4. **Memorize spelling rules and their exceptions, including these major ones:**
  - Put j before e except after c unless ei is pronounced with a long a sound.
  - Form plurals by adding -s to the ends of words, except when the original word ends in o, y, f, fe, ch, sh, or ss.
  - Double the consonant before adding -ed or -ing to a base word that ends in a consonant and is stressed on the preceding vowel.
5. **Commit the following facts about possessives to memory:**
  - You make singular nouns and plural nouns that don't end in -s possessive by adding 's to the end.
  - You make plural nouns that end in -s possessive by adding an apostrophe to the end.
  - The possessive forms of pronouns that come before other nouns are my, your, his, her, its, our, their, and whose.
6. **Always capitalize the following:**
  - The first word in a sentence
  - The first word in a quotation that's a complete sentence
  - Proper names and nouns that are used as names, such as Dad
  - Titles of people, songs, and literary works
  - Days of the week, months of the year, and holidays
7. **Check the context of the word if it's given to you.** In other words, use what you know about the words that the underlined word is put with to figure out the specific meaning that the test is looking for.
8. **Try breaking up a word if you don't know what it means.** For instance, you may not know the meaning of counterpoint, but you know that the prefix counter means "against," and you probably know that a point is a position or stance. By breaking down the word, you can deduce that counterpoint means "against a stance," which is pretty close to its actual meaning of "a contrasting but related element or theme."

### Tips for Mathematics/Quantitative Sections:

- 1. Break complicated equations down into smaller parts.** Try solving the problem before you look at the list of answers. This way, any trick answers on the list will not work. If you cannot get the exact answer quickly, try narrowing it down to two and make an educated guess.
- 2. Write in your test booklet.** Take advantage of the fact that you can write in your test booklet to perform calculations, draw diagrams, and cross out answer choices that are just obviously wrong.
- 3. Easy questions are worth the same amount of points as hard questions.** Approach each question carefully. Don't rush through the easy questions and make careless mistakes.
- 4. Memorize common math formulas.**
  - Perimeter of a rectangle:  $A = 2l + 2w$  or  $2(l + w)$
  - Perimeter of a square:  $A = 4s$
  - Area of a triangle:  $A = (1/2)bh$
  - Area of a rectangle:  $A = bh$  or  $lw$
  - Area of a square:  $A = S^2$
  - Diameter of a circle:  $d = 2r$
  - Circumference of a circle:  $C = 2\pi r$  or  $\pi d$
  - Area of a circle:  $A = \pi r^2$
  - Volume of rectangular solids:  $V = lwh$
  - Pythagorean theorem:  $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$
  - Average of a set of numbers:  $\text{Average} = \text{Sum of the numbers} \div \text{The amount of numbers in the set}$
- 5. Commit properties of angles to memory.**
  - Right angles measure  $90^\circ$ .
  - The sum of the interior angles of a triangle is  $180^\circ$ .
  - The sum of the interior angles of a quadrilateral is  $360^\circ$ .
  - Complementary angles add up to  $90^\circ$ .
  - Supplementary angles add up to  $180^\circ$ .
- 6. Memorize common measurement equivalents.**
  - 1 foot = 12 inches
  - 1 yard = 3 feet
  - 1 meter = 100 centimeters
  - 1 kilometer = 1,000 meters
  - 1 pound = 16 ounces
  - 1 cup = 8 ounces
  - 1 pint = 2 cups
  - 1 quart = 2 pints or 4 cups
  - 1 gallon = 4 quarts
  - 1 kilogram = 1,000 grams
- 7. Commit the order of operations to memory:** Think of PEMDAS — Parentheses, Exponents, Multiplication, Division, Addition, Subtraction — and you'll be set.

### Tips for Reading Comprehension Section:

1. **The reading comprehension section of the HSPT consists of several passages.** Each passage is followed by several questions about its contents, intent and voice.
2. **Familiarize yourself with the major types of reading comprehension questions** (main idea, details, attitude of the author and so on). When a question asks you to choose a title for the passage, make sure to choose the answer that best relates to the main idea of the passage.
3. **As you read, focus on the passage's main point, topic as well as the author's tone.** Pay close attention to the important details of the passage and don't worry as much about the minor details.
4. **Eliminate answer choices that don't relate to the information in the passage.** Be cautious when an answer contains debatable words such as always, never, and so on.
5. **Choose general answers for main-point questions.**
6. **Don't infer too much for inference questions.** The correct answers to these will be solidly based on clues in the passage. Whether you agree or not, only use the information in the passage to answer the questions.
7. Sometimes answers to specific-information questions may paraphrase the information in the passage.

### Tips for the Essay Section:

1. **You will also have to write one, well-composed essay as a writing sample.** The question choices are all based on your opinion and do not have a wrong answer. Make sure you read all of the questions carefully before making your choice. Always choose the subject which you feel the most comfortable with.
2. **You will have 30 minutes to plan and write your essay.** Take a few minutes to think about the question and tailor your response accordingly. Questions that ask you to compare, explain or discuss will each of require a different type of answer and essay structure. Review grammar and essay writing rules in your current grammar book.
3. **Make a brief outline or brainstorm ideas to help organize your thoughts.** Take the time to organize your thoughts on paper in a way that clearly and directly supports your point. It will save you time when writing.
4. **Each paragraph needs a strong topic sentence.** The sentence should clearly cover all the points you'll make in that paragraph.
5. **Before finishing, take a few minutes to reread your answer.** Neatly edit any spelling, grammar or punctuation errors you find. Pay attention to flow and add a linking word or phrase to make your writing flow smoothly.
6. **Practice writing by hand.** Today, most people write essays on a computer and we don't get much practice completing handwritten essays that are timed. It won't matter how good your essay is if it cannot be read.

Information was compiled from the following:

Gigantino, Jennifer; eHow Contributor. "High School Placement Test Tips". [www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com). © 2011 Demand Media, Inc. U.S.A. All rights reserved. Accessed: 13 November 2013.

Hatch, Lisa Zimmer and Scott Hatch. "Catholic High School Entrance Exams for Dummies". [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com). © 2013 & Trademark by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Accessed: 13 November 2013.

An additional free study guide may be found at [www.studyguidezone.com](http://www.studyguidezone.com). To access you may cut and paste the following URL into your web browser; <http://www.studyguidezone.com/pdfs/hsptteststudyguide.pdf>