

## Using Think-Alouds with Sample Test Items (Copyrighted Book Excerpt)

Teachers can use think-alouds to explicitly model test taking and thinking skills. Students can also participate in the thinking process. Below is an example of the kind of language that might be used in a think-aloud demonstrating how to determine what is most important and set a purpose for reading a test selection.

“Last night I was looking around on the Internet and I found this reading test sample, I want you to listen to the conversation I have in my own head about how I decide what’s most important on a test. This will lead us to explore the differences between what’s important in the reading we do each day and the testing items we see every now and then.

“As a test taker, I’m always trying to figure out what the evaluator is going to want to know about me. One of the ways I get a sense of this is by the kinds of questions that are asked. So, I’m thinking the questions are actually the most important part because they’ll help me determine what’s essential in the passage. In this question, ‘What is the paragraph four mainly about?’ the most important part is ‘mainly about.’ It’s really a main-idea kind of question, and I know I’ll have to make an inference about the main idea and rule out unreasonable choices.

“And this question, ‘Look at the outline below and answer the question that follows,’ has me looking at a partially completed outline. They’ve left the first line blank and listed supporting details below. The important part of this question is the blank line. I know I’m actually looking for a label that describes all of the examples. I’m pretty sure I know the answer now, but I’ll look for confirming evidence in the text.

“Now that I know what questions I’ll be asked, I can read and sift through paragraphs to find the answers. My purpose is set.”

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