

The Theory of Testing

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Have you ever walked into a classroom, looked at a test, and felt your stomach suddenly turn into a nervous little squirrel? If yes—good news! You’re perfectly normal.

Every day, thousands of kids sit down to take important tests—tests that might send them to special programs or fancy schools. And many of them feel worried, tense, or even convinced that everyone else will do better.

But today, I want to tell you a secret.

A scientific secret.

A *relaxing* secret.

A secret called...

The Theory of Testing!

But first—a little about me.

When I grew up, I took SO MANY tests that I felt like a walking pencil. Later, I became a scientist, which basically means I took even MORE tests (scientists take tests even when no one asks them to!). So I’ve learned something important about this whole testing business.

Ready?

Here we go.

Part 1 – The Test Makers’ Big Problem

Imagine you are a test designer. (Yes, that’s a job. And those people love puzzles so much that if the world ran out of puzzles, they would probably start rearranging their breakfast cereal into equations.) Their job is to find the “best of the best”—not by magic, but by creating a staircase of questions:

- **The first step must be small**, so everyone can climb onto it.
- **The last step must be giant**, so big that almost nobody can reach it.

In fact, they *want* at least one question to be so hard that almost no one solves it.

Not even you.

Not even the smartest kid in your state.

Not even your grandma who always knows the correct answer before you finish the question.

This is on purpose.

Why?

Because that’s how they measure who climbs the staircase, and how far.

Part 2 – A Scientist’s Trick

Now let me share a scientist’s trick (yes, a real one from real science).

When I look at a new scientific theory full of strange symbols and equations, I don’t start panicking. Instead, I play a game.

I take each part of the equation and stretch it to an extreme:

- *What if this number becomes zero?*
- *What if this number becomes HUGE, like infinity?*
- *What stays the same? What breaks?*

If the theory still makes sense at the edges, I know it’s strong.

And now here is the fun part:

Tests are designed using the SAME idea!

Test makers stretch the difficulty from very easy (zero) to practically impossible (infinity).

That's why some questions look like they came from another galaxy.

Part 3 – The Important Message (Pay Close Attention!)

Now that you know how tests are built, here is the part you **MUST** remember:

You are *not* supposed to solve all the questions.

Not today.

Not tomorrow.

Not even the kid with glasses who solves Rubik's cubes behind his back.

Nobody solves everything.

And that's OK.

The goal is not perfection.

The goal is *doing your best on the questions you can reasonably reach*.

Tests aren't designed to defeat you—they're designed to spread everyone out on a curve so teachers can see who did a little more, who did a little less, and who is ready for what.

Part 4 – A Secret Grown-Up Truth

People often think you need to attend the fanciest, sparkliest, most unicorn-powered school to become a genius.

But guess what?

Nope. Totally wrong.

Some of today's most famous creators and leaders started in completely ordinary schools—and some didn't finish school at all!

For example:

- **Elon Musk** built rockets *before* he ever got near an elite space school (because there isn't one!).
- **Bill Gates** left college early to build Microsoft.
- **Mark Zuckerberg** did the same thing with Facebook.
- **Maya Gabeira**, the record-breaking big-wave surfer, learned more from waves than from textbooks.
- **Malala**, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, became a leader because of courage, not fancy classrooms.

So remember:

It's not the school that makes you special—it's YOU who makes you special.

And between us...

some of the coolest people in the world didn't follow the usual school path at all.

(Shhh... don't tell your parents I told you that!)

Final Word from Lev

I took many tests on my way to becoming a scientist. Some I passed. Some I didn't. Some made sense.

Some made me want to hide in the refrigerator.

But I'm still here—and you will be too.

So when you sit down for your next test, remember:

- The easy questions are for warming up.
- The hard questions are for stretching your brain.
- The impossible questions aren't meant to be solved.

Relax.

Breathe.

Do your best.

And afterwards?

Reward yourself with something delicious. Scientists do that all the time.