

Steps to Opt Out

1. **Have conviction in your reason to opt out.** This could include: The test is written with tricks and distractors that are intended to fail 30% of our students every year. You advocate for multiple measures of assessment. You disagree with the weight put on the test including, teacher pay, school grades, retention, remediation or the denial of a diploma. You disagree with the federal intrusion on local decision and policy. It does not matter what your reason is, you just need to feel strongly about it. This will help you get through the process and the possible push back.
2. **Look at all the resources, and research to determine what tests you want to opt out of (FCAT, FSA, etc.).** You will need to decide for yourself what risk level is acceptable to you and your family.
3. **Determine what kind of opt out will work for you.** A student can refuse the test (see Instruction to refuse a computer based test and paper based test). Or, you can keep your child home during the testing window. If you keep your child home, research and be mindful of your district's truancy policy beforehand. The actual testing window can last as long as 2 weeks because of testing make-up days, and you do not want to be found truant. (Note: A scheduled dentist or doctor appointment is considered an excused absence in many districts, so this might be a good time to plan those). Whether you refuse the test or keep your child home during the test, the ultimate goal is to achieve a score of NR2, or non-attemptedness. This is not the same as receiving a 0.
4. **Determine if you need to write an opt out letter.** If you are opting out of 3rd grade FSA you will need to write a portfolio request letter at the very beginning of the school year (see Portfolio Letter to Teacher and Principal for example). Portfolios are considered an acceptable alternative assessment in the state of Florida. Your opt out letter should inform the school of your desire to have your child refuse the test. *Do not ask for permission to opt out – tell them you are opting out.* The only real reason to write an opt out letter is to gauge push back from school or district personnel or to see if they threaten you. You can still have your child show up on the day of testing and not take the test.
 - Remember: You are trying to get cooperation from the teacher and principal, so if you choose to write a letter, keep it "soft." There's no need to get tough unless you get push back. Note: If you write a letter quoting constitutional laws of parental rights, you are likely to receive a response from your district's legal department. If you want to ask for alternative activities for your child after (s)he refuses the test, you will need to send in a letter. You can also request to pick up your child in the office after (s)he refuses.

5. **Be prepared for test day with 2 options.**
- **Option #1 - Stay home on test day:** You may choose to keep your child home during test days. But if you do, ask school personnel how they handle testing make-up days. Some schools accept the family's wish to opt out, and they will not try to test your child during the make-up days. Other schools, however, might try to test your child on every make-up day. If your school does this, you may have to keep your child home during the entire make-up period. Review your district truancy policy, and remember that you may be able to avoid excessive unexcused absences by scheduling doctor and dentist visits.
 - **Option #2 - Refuse the test on test day:** Your child may go to school and refuse the test on test day. Florida gives paper tests and computer tests, and the refusal process is different for each one. Ask school personnel which test your child will be taking, and then see "instructions for refusing a paper test" or "Instruction to refuse a computer based test". Once a student breaks the seal on a paper test, or once (s)he breaks the seal virtually on a computer test, the student will receive a score of NR2 or non-attemptedness. Note: Some subject-based tests last only one day, and some last two days. If your child is opting out of a subject-based test that is scheduled to last *more than one day*, (s)he only needs to refuse it on the first day in order to get an NR2 for that particular test. Once a student receives an NR2 on a test, the school cannot try to retest the student on a make-up day.
6. **Know that every opt out case is different.** Schools have historically handled opt outs differently. Some schools make students sit and stare. Some schools allow students to go to other classrooms to read or work on schoolwork. Many have allowed students to be picked up by parents. You will need to work this out with your school. If these options are in your plan, you will want to confirm your arrangement through email. Always communicate through email so you can keep a written record.