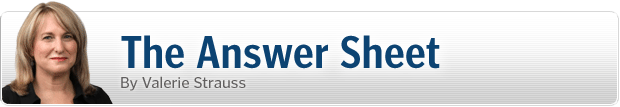
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50-plus banned words on standardized tests

By [Valerie Strauss](http://www.washingtonpost.com/valerie-strauss/2011/03/07/ABZrToO_page.html)

You might expect a standardized test to avoid using profane words but, it turns out, other words are banned too and they may surprise you: dinosaur and Halloween, rock ‘n roll and rap music, just to name a few.

That, at least, is what New York City education officials recently did when they provided guidance to standardized test developers, according to[*the New York Post*](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/50-plus-banned-words-on-standardized-tests/2012/03/30/gIQANuqJkS_blog.html). The words on the banned list (see below) were chosen because they supposedly could distract some students.

To be fair, New York City isn’t the only place that does this. Florida and Texas, for example, avoid words such as “hurricane” on their standardized assessments.

Why Halloween? Its pagan roots could offend the religious. Dinosaurs? Evokes evolution, which could upset creationists. You get the point.

What is there to say about people who think up words to keep off tests to avoid upsetting people, when it is the very tests themselves — and the high stakes put on the results — that people actually find so offensive?

Here’s the list, according to [SIlive.com](http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2012/03/50_words_banned_from_nyc_schoo.html):

Abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological)

Alcohol (beer and liquor), tobacco, or drugs

Birthday celebrations (and birthdays)

Bodily functions

Cancer (and other diseases)

Catastrophes/disasters (tsunamis and hurricanes)

Celebrities

Children dealing with serious issues

Cigarettes (and other smoking paraphernalia)

Computers in the home (acceptable in a school or library setting)

Crime

Death and disease

Divorce

Evolution

Expensive gifts, vacations, and prizes

Gambling involving money

Halloween

Homelessness

Homes with swimming pools

Hunting

Junk food

In-depth discussions of sports that require prior knowledge

Loss of employment

Nuclear weapons

Occult topics (i.e. fortune-telling)

Parapsychology

Politics

Pornography

Poverty

Rap Music

Religion

Religious holidays and festivals (including but not limited to Christmas, Yom Kippur, and Ramadan)

Rock-and-Roll music

Running away

Sex

Slavery

Terrorism

Television and video games (excessive use)

Traumatic material (including material that may be particularly upsetting such as animal shelters)

Vermin (rats and roaches)

Violence

War and bloodshed

Weapons (guns, knives, etc.)

Witchcraft, sorcery, etc.

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