

Beating Test Anxiety

What is test anxiety?

- It is when you are so nervous about preparing or taking a test that you have difficulty planning, thinking, concentrating, recalling what you have studied, and relaxing. *It is common, understandable, and curable.*

Is test anxiety all bad?

- No. We need a little anxiety to get us going. If we had no feelings of anxiety, we wouldn't care and we wouldn't get anything done.
- However, it is not good when we have so much anxiety that we set ourselves up for failure.

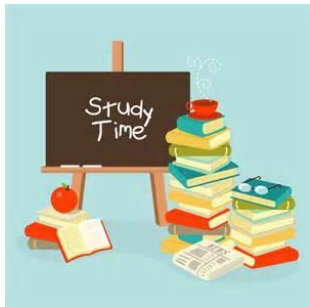


What can you do about it?

1. **Adequate Preparation**—begin your review long in advance of the test; call on the instructor during office hours to review previous exams and get feedback and suggestions; test yourself under timed conditions similar to the real test; use a tutor and ask the tutor to quiz you and help predict exam questions.
2. **Be More Positive.** Rather than indulge negative thoughts like “This test will be impossible...I will really mess it up...I will probably get dropped from my program, and wind up selling fast food...” try telling yourself “*I am well prepared... I will give it my best shot...it is just another routine test, like many I've done well on before...if it is hard for me, it will be hard for everybody else too.*”
3. **Relax.** You can't be relaxed and anxious at the same time, so move yourself to a more relaxed place by thinking of images like a happy day at the beach or a warm fireplace. Don't stop exercising—as it will bring down your general level of stress during the testing situation. Take frequent breaks – take a walk, talk with friends, eat a snack, play a video game. Learn progressive muscle relaxation and breathing techniques that will help stimulate physical relaxation response.
4. **Practice Deep Breathing.** Take deep breaths and say “I am calm...I am calm.” You can train yourself before the test to associate deep breathing with a relaxed state of well being. You can also rehearse calming yourself by imagining the future test while relaxed while picturing yourself remaining calm and doing well. Visit: <https://students.pulse.pacific.edu/x58250.html>
5. **Seek Help.** It is great to try to cope with test anxiety on your own, but why not work with an experienced counselor who can get you organized, encourage you, and quickly teach you these techniques.

Is it Anxiety or Preparation?

Test Taking Strategies



Before:

- Take a practice test the day before with conditions as much like the test as possible.
- Review your summary sheets for an overall view of the material. Recite in your own words
- Get enough sleep. Avoid caffeine which increases anxiety.
- Remember to encourage yourself and *STOP* critical statements.
- Give yourself time to feel composed and to be on time for the exam. Avoid anxious classmates who are talking about the exam.

During:

- Look over the entire test, *READ THE DIRECTIONS*, plan your approach, and schedule your time.
- Start with the easiest question first.
- Focus! Don't waste time and energy worrying, thinking about the consequences of not doing well, or wondering what others are doing.
- If you don't know an answer, mark the question and move on. Tell yourself that you probably studied it and the answer will come to you when you get back to it.
- If you start to feel anxious, practice your relaxation techniques. Use anxiety as a cue to relax. Close your eyes, take three deep breaths and then go back to the test.



Essay Exams. Organize your thoughts in a brief outline. Look for key words such as compare, contrast, describe, identify. Start with a short summary or topical sentence and then make your points. Don't ramble. Remember what the professor emphasized.

Multiple Choice Exams. Think of your own answer before looking at the choices provided. Eliminate clearly wrong answers and make an educated guess (unless there is a severe penalty for wrong answers). After you have answered the questions, return to those you were less sure about. Think about only one question at a time.

- If your time is running out, concentrate on the questions you know well and/or have the most weight.
- Use all the time allowed for reviewing your answers, completing ideas. Only change answers if you are sure of yourself.

After:

- Most importantly, reward yourself for all of your hard work and giving it your best!!
- Stop thinking about the exam! It's over. You made it through – go celebrate!

