

Overcoming Test Anxiety

Students often blame test anxiety for poor performance on exams. Anxiety is most often caused by a lack of preparedness. Before the test, be sure to be well-prepared:

- ✓ Discuss test content with instructor and classmates.
- ✓ Develop effective study and test preparation skills.
- ✓ Spread review over several days—avoid cramming the night before.
- ✓ Intense review should be done several days before the test.
- ✓ Review tests, notes and homework problems.
- ✓ Take a practice test under exam-like conditions, particularly a timed exam.
- ✓ Reward yourself after studying instead of getting involved in avoidance behaviors.
- ✓ Get regular exercise.
- ✓ Get sufficient rest the night before a test. Eat breakfast.
- ✓ Develop a positive attitude about the test. Remind yourself that you know the material and are well prepared.
- ✓ Don't study immediately prior to the test. Relax and focus on something else.
- ✓ Get to the class early enough to feel composed.
- ✓ Avoid anxious classmates who want to talk about the exam.
- ✓ Avoid drinking caffeine before a test—it can raise your pulse, blood pressure and other physical symptoms of anxiety.

During the Test

- ✓ Visualize yourself doing well and reaching your goals.
- ✓ Read the directions carefully.
- ✓ Budget your test taking time wisely. If you go blank on a question, skip it and come back to it later.
- ✓ Change position often. Do something different: get a drink, sharpen a pencil, or glance out a window.
- ✓ Practice physical relaxation techniques. Tense and release various muscle groups in your body. Breathe deeply and slowly.
- ✓ Disregard other students who may finish early. Use all of your time allowed.
- ✓ Afterward, reward yourself for your effort and avoid debriefing the test with others!

~Susan Haines
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