

Reducing Test Anxiety

Before the test

- Start preparing for exams as soon as you can; cramming is a big culprit of test anxiety.
- Talk to your professor or TA about suggestions for studying effectively. Ask about the test format (will it be essay, objective, fill-in-the-blank?).
- Create and review summary sheets with an overall view of the material.
- Write out 3x5 cards (flash cards) for quizzing yourself on specific concepts or formulas.
- Practice writing and taking your own tests—*without* referring to notes or other resources when answering questions. This will help you get used to the time limit and see what concepts you need to spend more time reviewing.
- Get plenty of sleep the night before the exam.
- Get out stress through physical activity.
- Do not have more caffeine than usual.
- Relax just before the exam with stretching or a pre-exam playlist. Remember to breathe deeply and slowly.
- Avoid last-chance studying right before the exam; remember you are already prepared.
- Avoid listening to others or discussing the exam with others while waiting for the exam. The anxiety of others can "rub off" and suddenly you begin to doubt yourself.
- Approach the exam with confidence. It is not a judgment of your ability, competence, or future potential. It is one measure of your knowledge at this particular moment. You have prepared; now it's time to show it!
- Plan a reward as something to look forward to after the exam.

During the test

- Review the entire test before answering any questions. Read the directions *twice*. Then, plan out your approach to the exam.
- Avoid making snap judgments. Anxiety will be worst at the start.
- Remember that having moderate levels of test anxiety is normal and even helpful. Don't feel pressured to be completely free of anxiety.
- If you go blank, skip the question and come back to it later.
- To provide an outlet for anxiety and increase accuracy, jot down *why* you are choosing or eliminating answers to multiple-choice questions.
- If you're taking an essay test and you go blank on the whole test, pick a question and start writing. It may trigger the answer in your mind.
- Remind yourself that perfection is not expected on essay tests. Just write.
- Make a schedule for answering questions. Allow more time for higher point questions. Pace yourself to answer as many questions as possible.
- Focus your attention on the test. Don't waste time and energy thinking about the consequences of not doing well or wondering what others are doing.
- Don't get bogged down by questions you don't know; move on. Later, the answer may come to you or you may get clues from other exam questions.
- Replace any negative thoughts with positive ones ("The test is important, but there will be others." "Feeling challenged is a good thing; I can handle it." "I can figure it out.")
- Ask for clarification from the professor (or proctor) if directions are unclear.
- Don't panic when other students start handing in their papers. There's no reward for being the first to finish.