



Overcoming Test Anxiety

1. Check in advance the format of the exam. Find out how many questions there will be and the time allotment.
2. Think of this exam as a challenge, a time to strut what you' have learned.
3. Get or design sample exams and take several practice exams. Time yourself to see if you can finish in the allotted time.
 - Do not expect to be able to work out very difficult problems on a test if you have not practiced working out these kinds of problems ahead of time.
 - Work out lots and lots of difficult problems dealing with each topic you will be tested on. Do one topic at a time.
 - Learn how to recognize problems or terminology you have learned in random order, i.e. not in the order you learned them or your textbook presented them.
 - Give yourself difficult practice exams with new problems you never saw before. Make sure the correct answers are available for checking your results. If you can get 100% on your own difficult tests, you are more likely to do well on the exam.
 - Do an error analysis of your typical errors. Look over your previous exams and practice exams and note what you usually get wrong; areas of weakness you need to restudy and your typical careless or "dumb" errors. Make a mental check list of these careless errors so you can use it to proofread your next exam.
4. Get enough sleep for at least two nights before your exam.
5. Practice relaxation exercises along with positively visualizing the exam going well for you. A simple relaxation technique is to sit or lie quietly and begin by focusing on your breathing. Breathe slowly and regularly and say "relax" with every exhalation. Do this for at least five minutes and as long as 20 minutes. Once you achieve a state of deep relaxation, say positive self-statements, such as: I am a good student; I am relaxed, calm, alert and confident on exams; I see myself accomplishing my goals; I am capable; I have confidence in myself. Then, while still in this deeply relaxed state, picture yourself taking your upcoming exam. See yourself calm, relaxed, alert, clear and confident on the exam. See yourself correctly answering all the questions and the exam going well for you. Visualize yourself succeeding. Do this relaxation and visualization exercise each day in the days before the exam and during the half hour or so before the exam.
6. Eat low fat protein (such as low fat yogurt or cottage cheese, broiled chicken or fish, or part skim milk, mozzarella cheese) an hour or two before the exam. This will keep you alert without giving you the rebound effect that is felt with caffeine or sugar.
7. Be hermit before the exam. Arrive just on time and do not discuss the exam with anyone.
8. Throughout the exam focus on remaining calm, relaxed, and positive. Check your breathing often. Keep it regular and slow. Make sure your breathing is from your lower lungs. Avoid rapid, shallow upper lung



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breathing which tends to increase anxiety levels. Check your neck and shoulder muscles and loosen any tight areas.

9. Throughout the exam say positive self statements to yourself and push away any disturbing or distracting thoughts. Say things like: I am a good student; I am very capable; I am learning more each day; My memory is improving each day; My mind is clear and alert; I see myself accomplishing my goals; I have confidence in myself; I am an intelligent, talented person; I am relaxed, calm and confident on my exam; I am eliminating any distracting or disturbing thoughts

10. Circle or underline significant words in the question. Read carefully to avoid misinterpreting what is being asked.

11. Do not spend too much time on any one question. Skip the harder ones and then go back to them later as your confidence builds. Many students do well by starting with the easiest questions first and working their way on to the more difficult ones as their confidence level increases. It is like a sifting process; they do the easiest question first, then the next easiest and so on. Before they know it, every question is answered.

12. When working out a problem, write down whatever you know. It might help you to figure the problem out and some teachers even give partial credit in recognition for what you know.

13. If it is a math test, and calculators are allowed, take advantage of them. Learn how to use them well ahead of time. There are appropriate and inappropriate times to use them. They can be very useful for checking your answers.

14. After finishing the test, verify your answers using checking techniques:

- Check for reasonableness. Does the answer make sense?
- Check the specifics of the problem or question. If you are unsure of your answer, do it again!
- Remember that on multiple choice exams your first response is often your best response. Unless you have a good reason, do not change your answer. Many students change their answers to incorrect ones.

15. Proofread your exam. Check for omissions and check to see if you have made any of the typical errors or pattern of error you were able to identify previously (see item #3E above).

16. Allow yourself the whole test period to finish the exam. Do not allow those who leave early to bother you. They often are not the ones who do best.

- Remain clear, calm, confident and positive.
- Maintain an alert mind and a cheerful attitude throughout the exam.

17. LEAVE AND REWARD YOURSELF FOR A JOB WELL DONE!



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