

TEST ANXIETY



Before the test:

- **Be prepared!** Learn your material thoroughly.
- Include as much **self-testing** in your review as possible.
- Be an **active** learner. Simply reading your notes is not enough.
- **Schedule your time.** Start early.
- Maintain a **healthy lifestyle:** get enough sleep, good nutrition, exercise, some personal “down” time, and a reasonable amount of social interaction. **A program of exercise is said to sharpen the mind and increase energy.**
- **Approach the exam with confidence:**
View the exam as an opportunity to show how much you’ve studied and to receive a reward for the studying you’ve done.
- As you anticipate the exam, **think positively**, e.g. “I can do OK on this exam, I’ve studied and I know my stuff.”
- Engage in “**thought stopping**” if you find that you are worrying a lot, mentally comparing yourself to your peers, or thinking about what others may say about your performance on this exam.
- **Don’t go to the exam with an empty stomach.**
Fresh fruits and vegetables are often recommended to reduce stress. Stressful foods can include processed foods artificial sweeteners, carbonated soft drinks, chocolate, eggs, fried foods, junk foods, pork, red meat, sugar, white flour products, chips and similar snack foods and foods containing preservatives or heavy spices.
- **Relax just before the exam.**
- Get to the exam **on time – not too late but not too early.**
- **Don’t try to do a last minute review.**
- **Don’t talk to other students** about the exam material just before going into the exam.

During the test:

- Sit in a **location** in the exam room where you will be distracted as little as possible.
- **Read the directions carefully.**
- **Budget your test-taking time.**
- As you work on the exam, **focus only on the exam**, not on what other students are doing or on thinking about past exams or future goals.
- **If you go blank, skip the question and go on.**
- If you feel very anxious in the exam, take a few minutes to **calm yourself down.** Stretch your arms and legs and then relax them again. Do this a couple of times. Take a few slow deep breaths. Do some positive internal self-talk; say to yourself, “I will be OK; I can do this.” Then direct your focus on questions; link questions to their corresponding lecture and/or chapter.
- If the exam is more difficult than you anticipated, try to **focus and just do your best.** It might be enough to get you through, even with a reasonable grade!
- **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.
- **Don’t panic** when students start handing in their papers. There’s no reward for being the first one done.

After the test:

- When the exam is over **treat yourself.** If you have to study for other exams, you may have to postpone a larger break, but a brief break can be the pick up that you need.

You can take control of test anxiety by overlearning your material. If interfering levels of test anxiety persist, however, talk to a counsellor for some specialized help.