

Managing Test Anxiety

Do you have a problem with test anxiety? Do you feel so apprehensive when you take an exam that your performance, and your grade, is affected?

When you're taking a test, some anxiety is good. A little stress helps you focus your attention. After all, tests are important.

However, if anxiety, nervousness, and stress interfere with your ability to show what you know, here are some strategies that have helped hundreds of students.

- **Identify situations that trigger your anxiety.**
 - Often, specific situations may cause you to feel nervous during an exam. If you can identify these triggers, you can take steps to change them.
 - Avoid discussing the exam just before class. Someone may mention something that makes you feel unprepared and trigger anxiety.
 - Don't worry if other students finish and you are only half done. Remind yourself that different people work at different speeds. Take your time, relax, and check your work.
 - If you are distracted by sounds in the room, choose a desk away from the hallway, door, teacher's desk, and other students.
- **Use physical approaches to control anxiety.**
 - Be careful what you eat and drink before tests. Sugar and caffeine make many people edgy, nervous, and irritable. Remember that soft drinks contain a lot of caffeine and sugar, so try to avoid them, as well as too much coffee, chocolate, and tea.
 - Eat balanced meals before exams, with plenty of protein and carbohydrates, to assure yourself of a good supply of energy without the ups and downs brought on by too much caffeine and sugar.
 - Exercise before an exam. Often, walking for twenty to thirty minutes will calm you down and give you a relaxed feeling as you enter the test room.
- **Don't let negative thoughts do you in.**
 - Many students put more pressure on themselves by thinking stress-building thoughts. *This exam is crucial to my future. I have to do well, or I'll never pass the class.* This kind of thinking is counter-productive.
 - Don't view tests as traps. Try to see them as a chance to show off what you know, to demonstrate to the professor what you've learned.
 - Rather than tell yourself how tough the test is, how worried you are, and how crucial a good grade is, try positive self-talk. Say things like this: *Okay, I feel good about this exam because I've prepared well. I'm ready to show what I know.*