

10 TIPS FOR REDUCING EXAM/TEST ANXIETY



Be Prepared

Know the material that you are going to be tested on. Ask lots of questions of your teacher to know what material will be on the exam.

Prepare a study schedule for the weeks prior to exams.

Focus on your learning style (auditory, visual or kinaesthetic) and use the techniques for studying that connect with that style. (See resource room 234 if you want help figuring out your style and how to capitalize on it!)

Keep it in perspective

Set realistic goals. How much is the exam worth? What is a reasonable amount of time to spend preparing for each exam?

Balance your study schedule. Build in study breaks.

Avoid Cramming

Do your homework and assignments regularly. If you do, you have already completed about half of the preparation.

Weekly, review your notes to keep them in your memory. This way you will LEARN the material over the long term not just memorize it the night before.

If you learn it, you **KNOW** it. If you memorize, you will likely forget it! Focus on **UNDERSTANDING**.

Relax

Is your stomach doing somersaults as you enter the exam room? It is OK...you need to feel some anxiety to allow you to be up to performing well. If you feel overly anxious, do some breathing techniques or close your eyes and focus on the task at hand for a minute. You are prepared. It will be fine.

Eliminate negative thoughts

To minimize your anxiety, focus on what you do know not what you do not know. Think about how much you have already done, not how much you still have to do. Reward yourself for study time well spent. You need to take a break when you reach a milestone.

Focus on the present, not the future

What can you do **NOW** to prepare? Don't think about how hard it is going to be or how much material there is to cover. **START** preparing **NOW**.

Know what to expect

Make lists of questions from homework, assignments and tests. Practice doing them.

Focus on understanding the answers, not memorizing (unless your teacher has told you that there is something specific you need to memorize).

Connect ideas from the course. Building connections helps solidify your learning.

Know the vocabulary...there is nothing worse than getting stuck on a question that has a word you do not know. Make a list of important terms.

Ask your teacher for tips about what to study.

Arrive Early

Don't experience the stress of being late for the exam. It is a nerve racking experience to be late and feel like you are behind. Show up extra early on exam day. Plan to leave home even earlier if the weather is bad.

Stay alert

Make an effort to have both food and sleep prior to your exam. If you wish to consume caffeine or sugar, do so in moderate amounts. While they may increase your focus in the short term, the level of alertness will drop as the exam continues. Also, caffeine and sugar can make you more nervous. Another tip for alertness: brush your teeth before your exam...you'll be awake then! A really minty piece of gum might do.

Stick with your routine

Establish a good healthy routine (sleep and nutrition) long before exam time starts. Don't alter your sleep patterns immediately before exams. Your alertness will suffer. Physical activity should be part of your routine. It keeps you alert and helps with your focus and energy level.

Sources: Carleton University Learning Support Services and M. Saunders, Earl of March S.S.