

# Managing Test Anxiety

Most students, even those who have prepared extensively, experience some level of anxiety before and during tests. While a certain level of test anxiety is beneficial (as it motivates students to adequately prepare), too much can be detrimental if it prevents them from studying, preparing properly, or concentrating during a test.



The following strategies can help control extreme test-taking anxiety:

- 1. Develop good study habits** – One of the most effective ways to handle test-taking anxiety is through proper preparation. Studying builds confidence, and as confidence increases, test anxiety decreases.
- 2. Be prepared** – If completely prepared for a test to the point of being familiar with any question that could be asked, anxiety will dramatically decrease. When studying a subject or concept that is difficult to understand, start early in the semester working with the professor, or a tutor to get the help needed.
- 3. Don't cram** – Cramming for an exam the night before is a major cause of test anxiety. Students who take their time to regularly study for an exam throughout the term will experience less anxiety than those who decide to study a day or even hours before one. If studying a difficult subject (i.e., chemistry, biology, math, etc.) it's imperative to start studying early on in the semester, as it is likely that some concepts, topics, and subjects will require outside help. Cramming can leave the student unable to get the help needed in time.

**Get adequate exercise** – Exercise relieves stress and increases mental function. It can also increase energy. Taking the time to take care of the body will help the student experience far less anxiety all around.

4. **Get plenty of sleep** – Not only is adequate sleep necessary for good health, but it's also an effective way to decrease anxiety. Not getting enough sleep before a test leaves the student fatigued, less able to concentrate, unable to remember everything, and more anxious.
5. **Get plenty to eat** – Never take a test on a hungry stomach, at least have a snack. Nutrients are necessary for proper brain function and physical energy while taking a test on a grumbling stomach will make it more difficult to concentrate on the test.
6. **Stay positive** – Dwelling on negative thoughts will increase anxiety and make it more difficult to perform. Confidence in the ability to take the tests allows the student to perform better.
7. **Stay relaxed** – Take a few minutes to relax before taking a test. Take deep breaths if struggling to relax and take a moment to clear your head. Focusing on something completely unrelated to the test and thinking about something fun to do later can help with relaxation.
8. **Ask for help** – If all else fails, ask for help. Severe test anxiety can be debilitating for students. If your mind goes completely blank every time you sit down to take a test, or you feel like you're going to pass out or throw up, you need to speak with a counselor. Don't be scared or ashamed to seek assistance. Test anxiety can be a real psychological condition that can cause otherwise smart, hardworking students to perform poorly academically.



Adapted by CGCC's Title V Project from:  
Loveless, Becton. "Study Skills for Students", January 2024, Education Corner,  
<https://www.educationcorner.com/study-skills/>. Accessed 3 July 2024