

Test Anxiety Tips

Here are some strategies that may help reduce your test anxiety:

Learn how to study efficiently.

AEP offers study-skills programs or other resources that can help you learn study techniques and test-taking strategies. You'll feel more relaxed if you systematically study and practice the material that will be on a test.

Study early and in similar places.

It's much better to study a little bit over time than cramming your studying all at once. Also, spending your time studying in the same or similar places that you take your test can help you recall the information you need at test time.

Establish a consistent pretest routine.

Learn what works for you, and follow the same steps each time you get ready to take a test. This will ease your stress level and help ensure that you're well prepared.

Talk to your teacher.

Make sure you understand what's going to be on each test and know how to prepare. In addition, let your teacher know that you feel anxious when you take tests. He or she may have suggestions to help you succeed.

Learn relaxation techniques.

To help you stay calm and confident right before and during the test, perform relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, relaxing your muscles one at a time, or closing your eyes and imagining a positive outcome.

Don't forget to eat and drink.

Your brain needs fuel to function. Eat the day of the test and drink plenty of water. Avoid sugary drinks such as soda pop, which can cause your blood sugar to peak and then drop, or caffeinated beverages such as energy drinks or coffee, which can increase anxiety.

Get some exercise.

Regular aerobic exercise, and exercising on exam day, can release tension.

Get plenty of sleep.

Sleep is directly related to academic performance. Preteens and teenagers especially need to get regular, solid sleep. But adults need a good night's sleep, too, for optimal work performance.

Don't ignore a learning disability.

Test anxiety may improve by addressing an underlying condition that interferes with the ability to learn, focus or concentrate — for example, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or dyslexia. In many cases, a student diagnosed with a learning disability is entitled to assistance with test taking, such as extra time to complete a test, testing in a less distracting room or having questions read aloud.

HERE'S THE MOST IMPORTANT TIP: Approach your studying seriously, but think of the test as a game. Your goal is to collect as many points as you can in the time available. Don't obsess about a particularly difficult question. If you're unsure of the answer, guess and move on. Remind yourself that you can miss several questions and still do well.