

Test Anxiety

WHAT IS TEST ANXIETY?

Too much anxiety about a test is commonly referred to as **test anxiety**. It is perfectly natural to feel some anxiety when preparing for and taking a test. In fact, a little anxiety can jump start your studying and keep you motivated. However, too much anxiety can interfere with your studying. You may have difficulty learning and remembering what you need to know for the test. Further, too much anxiety may block your performance during the test. You may have difficulty demonstrating what you know during the test.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE TEST ANXIETY?

You probably have test anxiety if you answer YES to four or more of the following:

1. I have a hard time getting started studying for a test.
2. When studying for a test, I find many things that distract me.
3. I expect to do poorly on a test no matter how much or how hard I study.
4. When taking a test, I experience physical discomfort such as sweaty palms, an upset stomach, a headache, difficulty breathing, and tension in my muscles.
5. When taking a test, I find it difficult to understand the directions and questions.
6. When taking a test, I have difficulty organizing my thoughts.
7. When taking a test, I often "draw a blank."
8. When taking a test, I find my mind wandering to other things.
9. I usually score lower on a test than I do on assignments and papers.
10. After a test, I remember information I couldn't recall during the test.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT TEST ANXIETY?

Here are some things you can do *before*, *during*, and *after* a test to reduce your test anxiety.

1. Use good study techniques to gain cognitive mastery of the material that will be covered on the test. This mastery will help you to approach the test with confidence rather than have excessive anxiety. Employ the tips we provide at [Preparing to Study](#).
2. Maintain a positive attitude as you study. Think about doing well, not failing. Think of the test as an opportunity to show how much you have learned.
3. Go into the test well rested and well fed. Get enough sleep the night before the test. Eat a light and nutritious meal before the test. Stay away from junk foods.
4. Stay relaxed during the test. Taking slow, deep breaths can help. Focus on positive self-statements such as "I can do this."
5. Follow a plan for taking the test such as the DETER strategy we describe at [A Strategy for Taking Tests](#). Don't panic even if you find the test difficult. Stay with your plan!
6. Don't worry about other students finishing the test before you do. Take the time that you need to do your best.
7. Once you finish the test and hand it in, forget about it temporarily. There is nothing more you can do until the graded test is returned to you. Turn your attention and effort to new assignments and tests.
8. When the graded test is returned to you, analyze it to see how you could have done better. Learn from your mistakes and from what you did well. Apply this knowledge when you take the next test.

You have to know the material to do well on a test. You have to control test anxiety to show what you know. See additional study skills resources at www.how-to-study.com