

Test-taking Anxiety



Anxiety and stress produced by an impending exam, or induced at the time of an exam, is often referred to as test-induced anxiety. It is common to be nervous before or during an exam, but test-induced anxiety can be serious enough to interfere with our potential to do our best, and warrants exploring strategies to mitigate its effects. Read about the strategies below and give them a try!

Rehearse how you are going to preform	Take care of yourself	Block out the nervous chatter	Build a key
Try and induce a similar level of stress while you are studying to help yourself adapt. Take practice tests with no notes, in the library, with a timer. If listening to music is calming, remember you can't listen to it during exam time so set it aside.	Try and exercise within 24 hours of the exam to help de-stress. Rather than cramming or pulling an all-nighter, get a good night's rest. Any benefit from cramming (which is minimal) is more than canceled out by the sleep deprivation! Limit caffeine and sugar the day of, which can make anxiety worse.	Avoid discussing the exam with others right before it begins, and don't try to pull out notes and cram as you wait for the exam to be distributed. Put in headphones to block out the noise, and meditate and try some breathing exercises instead.	Are there formulas, concepts, etc. that are crucial to know in order to complete the exam? Try jotting them down as soon as you receive the exam to use as a key. If your anxiety causes you to blank later on, you can rely on this to keep you centered.
Budget your time	Use positive self talk	Trust yourself	Distract yourself!
Flip through the exam to see how long it is and what question types appear. Budget your time accordingly, and read instructions carefully. Remember that it is not a race, and to use the full allotted time.	Tune out negative thoughts and worry, as they can chip away at your confidence. Instead, replace negative thoughts with something positive, such as <i>I got this</i> or <i>Don't worry, just try your best</i> .	Answer questions you know first to build confidence, and do not plan to return to them later (avoid panicky answer changing!). Mark and skip questions that you get stuck on and try your best to keep moving and make progress. Return to marked questions later.	After the exam is over, try and distract yourself by seeing a friend, taking a walk, etc. rather than fixating on your performance. Plan to review your answers when the exam is returned, and use the Examine the Exam handout to analyze your common errors.

Follow up on this handout!

- Attend our **Test Taking** workshop to invest in your study skills
- Schedule an appointment to talk with a counselor about stress and anxiety management: shcs.ucdavis.edu

*Handout designed in collaboration with UC Davis Counseling Services