

Coping with Test Anxiety

TEST TAKING



Test anxiety is a combination of cognitive, emotional, and physical symptoms that interfere with your ability to perform well on tests and may even interfere with your general studying.

Some Symptoms of Test Anxiety Include

Cognitive Symptoms

- * Negative Thinking
- * Racing Thoughts
- * Difficulty Concentrating
- * Procrastinating
- * Blanking Out
- * Overthinking

Emotional Symptoms

- * Anger
- * Guilt
- * Shame
- * Fear
- * Disappointment
- * Helplessness

Physical Symptoms

- * Shortness of Breath
- * Excessive Sweating
- * Rapid Heartbeat
- * Headache
- * Nausea
- * Lightheaded

A Few Possible Ways to Reduce and/or Manage It

Unfortunately, just telling yourself not to worry is unlikely to help; however, some of the following tactics may:

- Seek positive words of support (either self-talk or from a trusted support network).
- Confront and vent your anxiety by writing down your thoughts and feelings. When you're feeling calmer, review what you wrote. What would you say to comfort a friend who expressed those thoughts and feelings?
- Reframe your interpretation of physical changes, like increased heartbeat, as a signal to feel challenged rather than threatened (this type of cognitive reframing can be applied to all three categories of anxiety symptoms).
- If you can't calm your physical symptoms, try "resetting your system" through [Vagus Nerve icing](#). You can do this by dunking your face in or splashing it with cold water or with use of an ice pack.
- Take care of yourself: eat well (including managing your caffeine intake), get enough sleep, exercise, do things that bring you joy (like hanging out with friends, playing with pets, cooking, taking a long bath, etc.).
- Plan ahead. Have chargers, devices, pens, paper, earplugs, snacks, water bottle, etc. ready so you can just grab and go. If the exam is in an unfamiliar location, scout it out ahead of time.
- Practice meditation, deep breathing, and/or visual imagery. See our worksheet on some helpful breathing techniques.
- Rethink your relationship with assessment. Instead of a test/quiz/assignment being a crucible you have to cross, try looking at it as a valuable tool to gauge your learning and allow you to course-correct when you're off track.
- Consider requesting an accommodation through the campus Access Center.
- Don't forget your human resources! Your faculty, coaches, and advisors are happy to brainstorm more strategies, we WANT to help you, just ask.

If your anxiety symptoms are severe, it may be time to reach out to a mental health professional for additional help.

Video Resources

<https://www.mometrix.com/academy/test-anxiety-tips/>

<https://youtu.be/4FsgwLWdSS8>