

## Strategies to Consider for Reducing Test Anxiety

### Before the Test

- Being well prepared for the test is the best way to reduce test-taking anxiety.
- Space out your studying over a few days or weeks (i.e., distributed practice) and continually review class material and notes. Avoid relying on “cram” sessions.
- Attempt to maintain a positive attitude—with realistic, constructive self-talk—while preparing for and during the test.
- Get a good night’s sleep before the test.
- On the test day, avoid spending time with classmates who generate stress for you.
- Use the last few moments before the test to relax. Avoid last-minute cramming. Spend time reading for pleasure or some other minor distraction.
- Show up to class early, so you avoid worrying about being late.
- If experiencing physical tension, consider going for a brisk walk (not just a leisurely stroll) or other aerobic activity that will elevate your heart rate for 20 to 30 minutes.

### During the Test

- Remind yourself that the test is only a test.
- Focus on integrating details into the main ideas.
- Tell yourself that you will do your best on the test, and that will be enough.
- If you begin to get nervous, take a few deep, slow breaths to relax yourself.
- Read the directions slowly and carefully.
- If you do not understand the directions on the test, ask the teacher to explain.
- Skim through the test so that you have a good idea of how to pace yourself.
- Use the margins on paper tests—or scratch paper on e-exams—to write down important formulas, facts, definitions, and/or key words in the margin first, so you don’t worry about forgetting them.
- Do the simple questions first to build positive momentum and confidence.
- Concentrate on your own test and pacing. Ignore classmates and how fast they may have finished their own test.
- You do not always have to get every question right. If you do not know an answer, skip the question for the time being and come back to it later.
- Focus on the question at hand, making sure not to let your mind wander to other things.

### After the Test

- After completing the test, reward yourself with a favorite food item, a movie, or some other treat.
- Maintain positive self-talk and avoid dwelling on that one question that went unanswered.
- Reflect on one aspect of the test experience—a challenging question or tricky wording that you ultimately caught—and allow yourself a sense of pride for handling it to the best of your ability.

Adapted from “Realistic Thinking & Test Anxiety Form” from AnxietyBC ([www.anxietybc.com](http://www.anxietybc.com)).