

Test Anxiety Management

Whether it is your first college test or you are preparing for your final exams, the anxiety/test anxiety you may be experiencing is normal. This feeling can also be helpful, useful, productive, and mobilizing. Rather than experiencing it as something bad that should be changed or eliminated, use it to help you gain greater awareness.

Normal Test Anxiety

- Feeling pressure to do well
- Noticing thoughts about how you might do and how prepared (or unprepared) you feel
- Some physical discomfort (e.g. sweaty palms, increased heart rate, fidgety)
- Compelled to dedicate time to study that feels consistent with the amount/difficulty of material
- Noticing the importance of a particular exam and feeling driven to do well or try really hard
- Uncomfortable but still able to approach what's needed to perform well

vs.

Problematic Test Anxiety

- Feelings of panic (e.g. racing heart, shortness of breath, shaking, upset stomach)
- Avoidance or procrastination behaviors (e.g. put off studying)
- Doubts about ability to perform well—"I can't do this", "I am a failure" without evidence to support these thoughts
- Difficulty focusing due to feeling too distressed or overwhelmed
- Negatively impacts preparation and performance

Take a few moments to think about the efforts you have made that led to success on previous tests. In addition, identify some of the barriers or challenges you experienced. What are some steps you can take to address those items?

What are three challenges for you when preparing for tests?	What are three things you can do to combat those potential challenges?	What are three effective ways to study that have led to past academic success for you?
<i>e.g. the pressure to hang out with friends while studying</i>	<i>e.g. decide in advance where I will study so I limit the pressure I feel</i>	<i>e.g. reviewing past tests</i>

In preparation for exam day, refer to the following checklists. Completing these items may help you manage your test anxiety.

Course Management

- I met attendance requirements
- I completed all required assignments
- I took notes during class on a regular basis to support my learning
- I checked in with my instructors about what might be on the test so I can best prepare
- I set aside time each week in order to feel prepared for tests and get the grades I want
- I know where and when all my tests are held

Personal Management

- I know what to do if I have too many tests on one day or need to take them at a different time than scheduled (approach professor and/or academic advisor)
- I organized my schedule to get regular, sufficient sleep (7-8 hours per night)
- I utilized some of my time to be physically active (going on a walk, yoga, exercise)
- I ate healthy meals the night before and the day of my test (including managing the intake of caffeine [coffee, energy drinks, etc.] because it can increase anxious feelings)
- I made appropriate arrangements (with supervisor, co-workers, e-boards, roommates, significant others, family members, babysitters, etc.) to have ample time to study for my tests
- I made appropriate arrangements (with instructors, disability services, access services, supervisors, co-workers, e-boards, roommates, significant others, family members, babysitters, etc.) to have ample time to take my tests

Test Preparation

- I utilized the instructor's Office Hours and/or the TA or SI's study sessions
- I read all relevant material in my textbook and other assigned readings
- I accessed study guides, past tests, and/or practices tests for review (or have created my own)
- I made connections and distinctions around key concepts
- I imagined myself taking this test and doing very well even if it is really difficult
- I developed and practiced positive affirmations about how I will do on this test (e.g. I have worked really hard and I know this material, I will do the best I can and that is enough-I am enough)
- I know the material on my exams well enough to explain it to someone else
- I am confident that if a test were given today, I could pass it because I have kept up with the content

Test Taking

- Start:**
 - I arrive to class - or the testing site - early
 - I write down any information in my head to reference throughout the test
 - I read the directions thoroughly
 - I reviewed the entire exam and mentally allocate how much time each question/section will take
- During:**
 - I answered questions in the order I wanted to
 - I took pauses and deep breaths to reset myself if I started to feel anxious or uneasy
 - I paid attention to my own test and pace
 - I stretched in my chair when I noticed myself feeling tense to let go of negative energy
 - I practiced positive affirmations about myself and my ability to do well throughout the test
- After:**
 - I took a deep breath and exhaled
 - I rewarded myself for the time and effort spent preparing and the resolve to complete the test
 - I gave myself permission to relax (watch your favorite show, cook, go on a walk, hang out with friends, take a shower or nap)

**This resource was created with the support of Counseling and Psychological Services and Health Promotion at RIT. Some points listed may even cause anxiety for you, the goal is to provide you with knowledge and steps to improve success. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed and under supported, and need someone to talk to consider connecting to - your academic advisor, an academic coach in the Academic Success Center, Counseling and Psychological Services for a single session, the OMBUDS office. If it feels like a crisis and you need help right now, attend an Urgent Care appointment with Counseling and Psychological Services.*