

Coping with Test Anxiety/Test Preparation

Developed by Dr. Charlene Sorensen, Gallaudet University Department of Chemistry and Physics

Since you are required to take tests during the course of your education, stress and anxiety are things you need to learn to manage. There are specific things that you can do during the semester to reduce your level of stress.

One Thing at a Time

Often life seems crowded with things to do, people to see, email to answer, etc. It's important for you to set priorities and make choices about what needs to be done first. If you find yourself focusing on the stresses in your life, try writing down your worries. That way you can set them aside, and come back and think about them later when you have more time.

Follow a Regular Routine

Following a regular routine helps to reduce stress. Performing the same tasks every day will make you more comfortable. Your regular routine should include:

- exercise
- studying
- class preparation
- a healthy diet
- ample sleep
- time with friends

Visualize the Test Experience

Visualization is a way to mentally practice taking a test.

- With your eyes closed, picture yourself in the test taking room. See your self looking at the test and remembering each answer as it comes.
- Mentally review what you know about the subject (if you do not know enough, go back and review).
- Use the [3-breath technique](#) every time you feel stress or worry.

Beware of the "Leap and Dive" Effect

Many habits of mind and body can cause a "leap and dive" effect. Anything that makes you feel too high will later cause you to crash to a low. These leaps and dives of emotion can distort your thinking and make it hard to

concentrate. When you are trying to study, you should avoid the mental and physical behaviors that cause these leaps and dives. Examples of things that you should avoid because they cause a temporary "leap" are:

- foods that are high in sugar
- concerns about the future
- not enough sleep
- romantic concerns
- drugs and alcohol

Exam Week Preparation

The week of the test you should try to continue to follow your regular daily routine. You should add a couple more activities into your pre-established routine. For example:

- establish priorities for studying
- begin studying
- take review notes
- reduce your notes to a page or a card
- meet with a study group (if available)
- study on your own
- do a [breathing exercise](#) to relax
- get enough sleep

Just Before the Test

Physical Preparation: The morning of the test you should try to eat a balanced breakfast. Don't eat a breakfast of ONLY carbohydrates (like cereal). This leads to a quick wake up, but you will feel tired two hours after breakfast. Instead you should eat:

- a mix of carbohydrates, protein, and/or fruit (like toast, eggs, and juice)

There are also specific foods and beverages you should avoid because they can increase your stress level. Try to AVOID eating:

- processed food
- artificial sweeteners
- soft drinks
- chocolate
- caffeine
- junk food
- alcohol

Mental Preparation: You want to feel relaxed when you sit down to take the test, so make sure you do the following things:

- mentally review your notes
- arrive to class on time
- do a breathing exercise to relax

Good Luck!