

Test-Taking Anxiety: A Self Assessment

Self-Assessment

Mental

1. I have trouble focusing while study for a test or during a test.
2. Sounds and noises bother me when I am taking a test.
3. I “blank out” when I receive my test.
4. I only remember answers after the test is over.

Physical

1. I experience physical discomfort (e.g., nausea) before or during a test.
2. I have headaches before or during a test.
3. My heart beats faster and/or I have trouble breathing before or during a test.
4. I am tense and have difficulty sitting still during a test.

Emotional

1. I more sensitive and irritable before a test.
2. I feel pressure to succeed in school from family, friends, or myself.
3. I have difficulty sleeping the night before a test.
4. I place an extraordinary amount of significance on each test.

Personal Habits

1. I often stay up late studying the night before a test.
2. I have a personal history of failure taking specific types of tests (e.g., math, essay).
3. My caffeine intake is higher and/or I do not eat immediately before a test.
4. I avoid studying and do less important tasks instead.

Yes/No

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Evaluation

If you answered “yes” ...

13-16 times: You experience severe test anxiety and should work with the university’s academic support programs to learn strategies for managing this issue.

9-12 times: You experience moderate test anxiety and could benefit from working with the university’s academic support programs to reduce your stress.

5-8 times: You experience mild test anxiety that may occur irregularly. Reflect on your own approaches to tests to determine when or why this anxiety appears and research strategies for managing it.

1-4 times: You rarely experience the negative effects of test anxiety. Yet slight anxiety can be positive and help improve test performance.

Managing Test Anxiety

Deep Breathing

Step 1: Stand up and reach your arms toward the ceiling, then slowly bend over and touch your toes.

Step 2: Lie down on the floor or bed and then inhale and exhale to the count of four.

Step 3: Close your eyes and focus on getting each part of your body to relax.

Stay Calm

Be confident in your knowledge and practice deep breathing before entering class.

Think Positively

Remind yourself of your weekly effort to increase confidence on test day.

Maintain Perspective

1. No test defines a person’s worth or intelligence.
2. Tests are an opportunity to show the instructor what you have learned.
3. A low grade suggests that you should try new strategies prior to the next exam.

Reframing

Reframe negative thoughts into positive thoughts:

I’m terrible at test taking. Failing may mean expulsion from college.	<i>becomes</i> <i>becomes</i>	I’m improving my test taking. It is just one test, it does not mean I will fail to succeed in college.
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Visualization

Envision a place that you find relaxing and “visit” it before the test.

Journal

Express your fears and anxieties in writing 30 minutes before the test.

Resources

Gardner, John N., and Betsy O. Barefoot. *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success*. 13th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2018.

Gore, Paul A., et al. *Connections: Empowering College and Career Success*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2016.