

STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH TEST ANXIETY

Test Anxiety Defined

Test anxiety is a fear of having to take a test. It can be caused by stress resulting from a variety of factors, including fear of failure, lack of preparation, outside pressure, or self-doubt.

Ways of Reducing Test Anxiety PRIOR to Taking the Test

1. Ask the instructor for a list of topics to focus on for the exam. If one is not available, create your own using what the instructor seemed to focus on in class.
2. Identify strengths and weaknesses that you have in the topics the exam will cover. Then adjust your studying accordingly.
3. Don't cram. Take plenty of time to study gradually as an exam approaches. Remember that anxiety is caused because you are stressed about the test. Cramming only reinforces the fear.
4. Avoid a "must win" situation on an exam. Have a back-up plan of what you might do if the exam goes poorly.
5. Talk to a counselor, tutor, or instructor about your anxiety. Each might have some helpful strategies.
6. Get plenty of rest prior to an exam. Avoid caffeine and any other type of stimulant. Be calm going into the exam.
7. Work with a study partner or group if productive. If a group is overly social or you feel that you aren't getting anything from it, discontinue it.
8. If possible, about a half hour before the exam starts, do some problems or take a mock quiz. This technique helps you focus for the exam and begin the exam in stride.

Ways of Reducing Test Anxiety WHILE taking the Exam

1. Quickly survey the exam. Note how the points are allotted and if there are some questions you might find easier.
2. Start with an easy problem to build confidence. Confidence quickly overcomes anxiety.
3. Try to tackle the questions with the highest point value early in the exam.
4. Budget your time on the exam. Try to answer each question.
5. If there is time at the end, look over the exam for little mistakes that might have been made along the way. Remember that in mathematics, checking your answers can be very useful.
6. If you know something is wrong with a solution but can't figure out where the error is, turn the paper over and start the problem from the beginning. Many times small errors go unnoticed when reviewing a solution. By beginning the problem again, you reduce the risk of making that same error again.
7. If you go blank, put your pencil down and take a few deep breaths while letting your mind wander to other things, preferably a positive recent experience.