

Types of Test Taking Anxiety

Situational Test Taking Anxiety affects a student in individual situations such as specific classes, subject areas, or in instances where the test taker does not understand the material or how to prepare for the test.

Examples:

1. Test and quizzes in math always fill the test taker with dread.

In this instance, the test taker has a math anxiety. He or she may take tests in others courses and not feel as much or any anxiety.

2. The test taker is nervous because he or she does not know what to expect on a test.

In this instance, the test taker experiences anxiety not because of test taking. The anxiety is because of lack of preparation or understanding.

Chronic Test Taking Anxiety affects test taking in all content areas regardless of material mastery or preparation.

When a student suffers from chronic test taking anxiety, he or she is comfortable with the subject matter and has mastered the material. However, anxiety surrounding the test taking situation significantly interferes with test performance. The test taker may “blank out” learned material, have a racing heart beat, or shake.

Note: It is important to understand that a certain amount of nervous energy when test taking is natural and even desirable.

Wellness Center

If a student wants or needs an assessment for test taking anxiety, he or she may make an appointment at Cameron’s Wellness Center.

Professional counselors can help clarify potential challenges and suggest appropriate interventions.

The Wellness Center is located on the first floor of North Shepler. Visit the website at <https://www.cameron.edu/wellnesscenter> for hours and additional information.



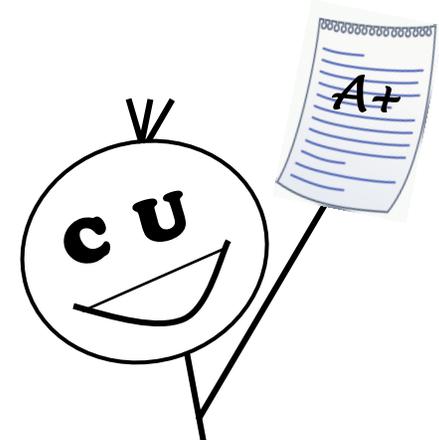
THE OFFICE OF
TEACHING & LEARNING

2800 W. Gore Blvd.
North Shepler, 4th Floor, Room 415
Lawton, OK 73505

Phone: 580.581.5900
Fax: 580.581.5904

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Relaxation Strategies for Test Taking Anxiety



Test Taking
Strategies

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Reality Check

1. If you are not prepared for your test or exam, recognize where your anxiety originates.
2. To alleviate stress caused by lack of preparation, attend class, complete homework, create a study plan, follow through, and practice effective test taking strategies.
3. Do not skip the test because of test anxiety. Take test and do your best.
4. After the test, review your performance, make an action plan for rectifying the situation, and move forward.

Note: In most courses, one poor performance, especially on a test early in the semester, will not cause a student to fail the course. Check with your professor. Explain your situation and ask for guidance.

General Guidelines

1. Prepare for tests. Overlearn. Overlearning means learning material beyond initial mastery. The material becomes automatic.
2. Take care of your body. Get a good night's sleep before tests, eat an appropriate meal, and avoid too much caffeine.
3. On test day, dress comfortably and make sure you have all appropriate materials (such as a pencil and Scantron).
4. Allow yourself ample time to arrive for the test. Rushing leads to anxiety.

Use Relaxation Strategies

Muscle Relaxation

Before the test:

1. Understand the difference between tensed muscles and relaxed muscles.
2. Lie down in a comfortable position.
3. Beginning with your feet, tense your muscles and relax. Focus on the difference between the two feelings.
4. As you tense and relax your muscles, breathe deeply.
5. Work your way through your body. Learn to know when you are tensing your muscles.

During the test:

1. Breathe deeply and relax your shoulders.
2. With your hands in your lap, make fists to tense your muscles and then relax.
3. Repeat until you feel calmer.

Visualization and Desensitization

Before the test:

1. As part of your study plan, practice taking tests in a calming, familiar place.
2. Wear a favorite piece of jewelry or clothing while studying.
3. Practice taking the test several times. Focus on the feelings of competence and mastery.

During the test:

1. Wear the favorite piece of jewelry or clothing.
2. As you take your test and recognize that you are experiencing anxiety, stop and close your eyes.
3. Visualize your test taking practice. In your mind's eye, see the test and remember your calm state as you worked through the test.

Use Positive Self-Talk

Practice "cognitive restructuring," a process of using positive self-talk to encourage oneself rather than defeating, negative self-talk or messaging.

How to use positive self-talk:

1. Become aware (mindful) of when you are giving yourself a negative message.
2. Change the message. Avoid absolutes. For example,
Negative message: "I always fail math tests. I will never pass this class."
Positive message: "Although I've struggled in the past, I'm improving. I'm learning new strategies and I can learn to succeed. I'm progressing."
3. Be persistent. Change happens slowly.

