

The background of the slide is a photograph of a university campus. In the foreground, there is a wide, light-colored paved walkway that leads towards a building. The walkway is flanked by green grass and several large palm trees. In the background, a white building with a red-tiled roof and arched windows is visible. A small tower with a cross on its side is part of the building. The sky is blue with some white clouds.

Handling Test Anxiety

Learning Objectives:

- Understand what test anxiety really is
- Gain strategies for controlling anxiety

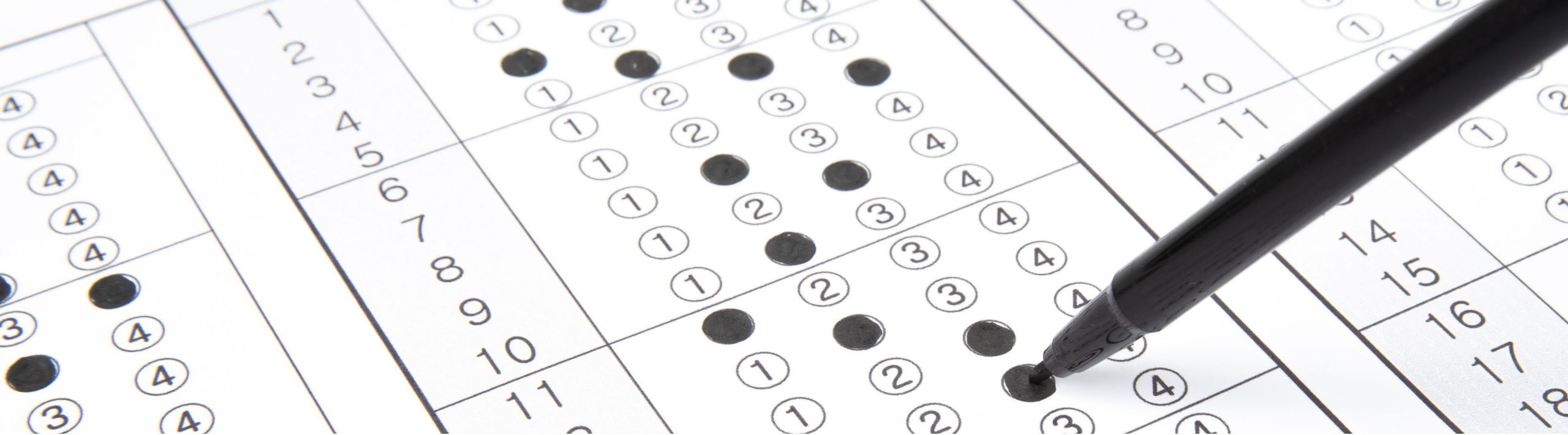


Test Anxiety And How To Control It

For many test takers, preparing for a test and taking a test can easily cause worry and anxiety. In fact, most students report that they are more stressed by tests and schoolwork than by anything else in their lives, according to the American Test Anxiety Association.

Most of us have experienced this. It is normal to feel stress before an exam, and in fact, that may be a good thing. Stress motivates you to study and review, generates adrenaline to help sharpen your reflexes and focus while taking the exam, and may even help you remember some of the material you need. But suffering too many stress symptoms or suffering any of them severely will impede your ability to show what you have learned.





Outcomes of Test Anxiety

Poor test performance is also a significant outcome of test anxiety. Test-anxious students tend to have lower study skills and lower test-taking skills, but research also suggests that high levels of emotional distress correlate with reduced academic performance overall. Highly test-anxious students score about 12 percentile points below their low-anxiety peers. Students with test anxiety also have higher overall dropout rates. Test anxiety can negatively affect a student's social, emotional, and behavioral development, as well as feelings about themselves and school.



You can manage test anxiety!



Why does test anxiety occur?

Inferior performance arises not because of intellectual problems or poor academic preparation. It occurs because testing situations create a sense of threat for those who experience test anxiety. The sense of threat then disrupts the learner's attention and memory.



If you experience test anxiety, have hope!

Experiencing test anxiety doesn't mean that there's something wrong with you or that you can't perform well in college. The trick is to keep stress and anxiety at a level where it can help you do your best rather than get in your way.



Strategy 1

Strategy 2

Strategy 3

Strategy 4

Strategy 5

Strategy 6

Strategy 7

Strategy 8

Strategies for Preventing and Controlling Test Anxiety

Here are steps you can take if you find that test anxiety is getting in your way.

When you are finished learning the strategies, click the arrow to watch the video.



Be Prepared

A primary cause of test anxiety is not knowing the material. If you take good class and reading notes and review them regularly, this stressor should be greatly reduced if not eliminated. You should be confident going into your exam (but not overconfident).



Avoid Negative Thoughts

Your own negative thoughts—“I’ll never pass this exam” or “I can’t figure this out; I must be really stupid!”—may move you into a spiraling stress cycle that in itself causes enough anxiety to block your best efforts. When you feel you are brewing a storm of negative thoughts, stop what you are doing and clear your mind. Don’t practice having anxiety! Allow yourself to daydream a little; visualize yourself in pleasant surroundings with good friends. Don’t go back to work until you feel the tension release. Sometimes it helps to take a deep breath and shout “STOP!” and then proceed with clearing your mind. Once your mind is clear, repeat a reasonable affirmation to yourself—“I know this stuff”—before continuing your work.



Visualize Success

Picture what it will feel like to get that A. Translate that vision into specific, reasonable goals and work toward each individual goal. Take one step at a time and reward yourself for each goal you complete.



It's All About You!

Don't waste your time comparing yourself to other students in the class, especially during the exam. Keep focused on your own work and your own plan. Exams are not a race, so it doesn't matter who turns in their paper first. Certainly, you have no idea how they did on their exam, so a thought like "Kristen is already done, she must have aced it, I wish I had her skills" is counterproductive and will only cause additional anxiety.



Have a Plan and Follow It

As soon as you know that an exam is coming, you can develop a plan for studying. As soon as you get your exam paper, you should develop a plan for the exam itself. We'll discuss this later in this chapter. Don't wait to cram for an exam at the last minute; the pressure you put on yourself and the late night will cause more anxiety, and you won't learn or retain much.



Eat and Sleep Well

Make sure you eat well and get a good night's sleep before the exam. Hunger, poor eating habits, energy drinks, and lack of sleep all contribute to test anxiety.



Chill!

You perform best when you are relaxed, so learn some relaxation exercises you can use during an exam. Before you begin your work, take a moment to listen to your body. Which muscles are tense? Move them slowly to relax them. Tense them and relax them. Exhale, then continue to exhale for a few more seconds until you feel that your lungs are empty. Inhale slowly through your nose and feel your ribcage expand as you do. This will help oxygenate your blood and reenergize your mind.



Keep it in Perspective

Come to the exam with everything you need like your pencils, erasers, calculator, etc. Arrive to class early so you aren't worried about time. Try to avoid the pre-exam chatter of your classmates, as this may contribute to your anxiety. Instead, pick your favorite chair and focus on relaxing.



Video

Watch this video from College Info Geek on Test Anxiety: How to Take On Your Exams Without Stress



The background of the slide is a photograph of the Saint Leo University campus. It features a wide, paved walkway lined with lush green grass and several tall palm trees. In the distance, a large, light-colored building with a red-tiled roof and a central clock tower is visible. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. A semi-transparent dark grey banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the title and contact information.

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