

# Managing Test Anxiety: Tips & Strategies for Success

Feeling anxious before or during an exam is a common experience, but it can be managed with preparation, positive self-talk, and effective regulation techniques. These strategies are rooted in research from educational psychology and stress management.

## 1. Prepare Early

Begin reviewing course material at least three weeks before the test. Space out your study sessions and use active recall strategies like practice tests and self-quizzing to build confidence and memory (Dunlosky et al., 2013).

## 2. Support Your Body to Support Your Brain

Maintain a healthy routine: aim for 7–8 hours of sleep, eat protein-rich and balanced meals, stay hydrated, and make time for movement. These habits improve focus, reduce anxiety, and support brain function (Putnam et al., 2016).

## 3. Use Positive Self-Talk

Replace anxious thoughts with affirming ones:

- “I’ve prepared thoroughly. I can do this.”
- Positive self-talk and cognitive reframing help regulate anxiety and improve performance (Zimmerman, 2002).

## 4. Plan the Night Before

Set out everything you’ll need: pens, pencils, student ID, calculator, water bottle, etc. Double-check the exam time and location. Set multiple alarms if needed. Then give yourself at least an hour to unwind before sleep.

## 5. Arrive Calm and Focused

Aim to arrive on time—but not too early, which can fuel nervous conversations. Avoid discussing the exam content with others. If others are anxious, distance yourself and use calming techniques like slow breathing.

## 6. Choose a Good Seat

Pick a seat where you’re least likely to be distracted. Once seated, begin deep breathing or grounding strategies to steady your mind (Roediger & Karpicke, 2006).

## 7. Read Carefully and Focus

Take time to read all instructions and skim the entire exam to strategize how to use your time. Begin with the questions you're most confident about to build momentum.

## 8. If You Go Blank... Pause

If your mind goes blank or you feel overwhelmed, stop. Take 3–5 deep breaths, stretch your arms, or press your feet firmly into the ground (Wieman et al., 2010). Then return to the question or move on and revisit it later.

## 9. Progress Is What Matters

Even if the exam is harder than expected, stay focused and do your best. Partial answers can still earn marks. Keep moving forward.

## 10. Celebrate Afterwards

Give yourself credit for your effort. Whether it's your favorite snack, a walk, or relaxing music—treat yourself for making it through.

### Optional Resource:

Watch Amy Cuddy's *Power Pose* video on how body posture can impact confidence and reduce stress before a high-stakes situation like an exam:

Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are – TED Talk

### References

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