



THE ART OF GETTING READY FOR FINALS

-CLAYTON COUNSELING DEPT.

PRE-TEST PREPARATION

- **Start studying 2 to 3 weeks in advance:** Budgeting your time reduces stress and makes it easier to absorb material. For example, don't do all 50 review sheet questions at once. Do 10 per night for 5 nights. Also, attend review sessions, if offered.
- **Talk to instructor:** Ask instructor to clarify areas that will be emphasized if you are still uncertain about what material will be covered in the exam.
- **Organize materials:** Place notes, previous quizzes and tests, study guides in chronological order. Make appt. with teacher to review tests that you aren't allowed to keep. Check their web pages, if they have one, for tips and review sheets.
 - Compare with friends to see what materials you're missing and get copies of those items.
- **Learn stuff you didn't already know:** List what you didn't learn, then re-read those materials and re-do some old assignments. *Make a list of questions you still have and visit with teachers to discuss. Ask friends and teachers for help with this.*
- **Prioritize according to importance:** Separate what is *most likely* to be on the test from what *may* be on it. Study the *most likely* items first and spend the most of your time with them.
- **Test yourself:** Make up and write down likely test questions. Have someone ask you these questions. Get a study group together to share and answer potential questions. Caution: Choose who you study with carefully. Stay away from those who aren't serious about their studies.

DAY OF THE TEST

- **Stay with normal routine:** including a good night's sleep the night before and a good breakfast.
- **Do something relaxing for the hour just before test, if possible.**
- **Avoid conversations about the test with overly anxious classmates; especially just before test.**
- **Look over the entire test before starting.**
- **Take care of restroom needs before test time, if possible.**
- **Bring all necessary utensils for test (i.e. pencils, calculators, etc.)**

DURING THE TEST

- **Focus your attention on the test in front of you:** Let go of thoughts about not doing well or how others are doing or where they are in the test.
- **Read over instructions TWICE.**
- **Look over the entire test.**
- **Do the easiest problems and problems with most value first.**
- **Don't dwell on questions that you are having trouble with if time is a factor:** Mark them and come back to them later. The answer may pop into your head while working on something else.
- **Don't rush, pace yourself:** *Read the entire question* before looking at the possible answers.
- **Write neatly:** Your answer will likely be marked wrong if your instructor can't read your response.
- **Look over the test when finished, but only change answers if you misread or misinterpreted a question. *Otherwise, the first answer you put down is most likely the right one.*** Look for careless mistakes in your essay writing (i.e. grammar, sentence structure, spelling) and be sure the entire question was answered, not just one part of it.

DEALING WITH TEST ANXIETY

Note: Test anxiety is a normal emotion when it comes to test taking, especially if one hasn't adequately prepared. However, if you repeatedly "blank out" or overreact, then Test Anxiety could be evident.

PRE-TEST SUGGESTIONS

- **Avoid Cramming-** Starting well in advance can significantly reduce stress.
- **Start Positive Self-Talk:** Research suggests that most self-talk is negative and self-defeating. i.e. "I'm sure I didn't study enough."
 - **Write each negative thought down and counter with a positive statement:** (i.e. Negative- "At least half the kids are smarter than me in here." Positive- "No one studied any harder than I did. I know I'll do ok.")
 - **Give yourself pep talks, like you would a friend:** "You can do this." "You did well on the homework and quizzes. You'll do well on the test too".
 - **Repeat positive statements to yourself.** This activity will program your mind for success and crowd out thoughts of failure. "Ok, I'll just relax and take it one question at a time."
 - **Encourage yourself:** STOP critical statements that pop into your head while studying and replace them with positive ones. (i.e. "I'm going to do well because I started studying 2 weeks before the final.")
- **Try not to compare yourself to others:** You have no control over what they do or don't do. You only have control over your own decisions and actions.
- **Find a reward that is meaningful for you after studying instead of avoiding the studying to begin with:** (i.e. Tape a program and watch it *after studying* instead of watching it before you study).
- **Practice relaxation techniques:** i.e. Slow deep breathing, stretching, yoga, closing eyes and picturing a peaceful scene. Use these techniques during the test too.
- **Exercise Regularly-** including the day before exam.
- **Eat well and get enough sleep (avoid caffeine- it can make you even more anxious)**
- **Gain confidence in your ability by doing what was suggested previously in this handout:** You will know if you have worked hard and prepared properly. Use this fact in your positive self-talk.

DAY OF TEST SUGGESTIONS

- See Test Taking suggestions stated previously in "Day of Test" section.
- **Don't talk to friends about test material or what they did to prepare just before going in for exam:** Comparing with others only builds anxiety. We can't do anything about what they did.
- **While waiting for test to begin...** Think of something fun. Remind yourself that, as important as it is, it's still only a test...not a life-threatening event.

DURING TEST SUGGESTIONS

- Follow Test Taking suggestions stated previously in "During the Test" section.
- **If you start feeling anxious during the exam:** Take a few minutes time out and calm yourself down by...deep breathing, stretch arms and legs a couple times, positive self talk- "I will be O.K. I studied. I can do this."
- **If the test is harder than anticipated:** Just focus on doing your best. Your family and teacher will know that you studied hard. They'll see that you are doing your best so don't worry.
- **Take your time:** Rushing only builds stress and creates careless mistakes.
- **Stuck on a question?** Mark the question and tell yourself that you probably studied what it's asking and the answer will likely come to you later.

- **Ask the instructor a question:** You won't appear foolish. Other students are probably doing it or wanting to do the same thing.
- **Get a drink or go to the bathroom, if allowed, to help control the anxiety:** Explain your situation to teacher beforehand. They may allow you to do this if you are upfront about your anxiety.
- **Think about the post-exam reward you promised yourself for a moment:** The thought of having something fun to look forward to will relax you.
- **If time is running out:** Focus on questions you feel you have best chance of answering correctly and that carry the most weight.

AFTER TEST SUGGESTIONS

- **Remember to reward yourself after the test.**
- **Don't go over the test questions or your answers with others:** This is tempting but very stressful as we tend to doubt ourselves. Be patient and wait until you get the exam back. Then you can deal with the reality of what is right in front of you instead of relying on an imagination that could play tricks on you.
- **If you did well:** Review your preparation routine and make sure you repeat those activities.
- **If you didn't do well:** Set up a conference with the teacher to get tips that will help you for your next test. Also, review your procedures to see what didn't work and change them. You have control over how you prepare! Remember that!

REMEMBER 2 THINGS:

- **FOCUS ON THOSE THINGS THAT YOU HAVE CONTROL OVER.**
- **IF YOU HAVE WORKED HARD AND STUDIED PROPERLY, YOU SHOULD BE PROUD OF YOURSELF, NO MATTER WHAT THE OUTCOME OF THE TEST.**

RESOURCES

Internet Sites:

Test anxiety sources:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning/mcanx.html
www.counsel.ufl.edu/selfHelp/testAnxiety.asp
www.indiana.edu/~caps/flyers/testanx.html
www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/handouts/1305.html

Test Taking Strategy sources:

www.testtakingtips.com/test/true.htm
www.mentalnotemusic.com/studyfinals.htm
www.parktutor.org/Staubach/examprep.htm

Book

No More Test Anxiety by Ed Newman. Ph.D.
www.learningskills.com/index.html

Looking for a test to measure Test Anxiety? www.learningskills.com/test.html