Reducing Test Taking Anxiety

<http://www.testtakingtips.com/anxiety/index.htm>

It's normal for kids to get nervous before a significant test. This is actually a good thing. That adrenaline boost can be helpful, but it can be hard to obtain and *maintain* that perfect level of nervousness.Test anxiety is when a student excessively worries about doing well on a test. This can become a major hindrance on test performance and cause extreme nervousness and memory lapses among other symptoms. The following are tips on reducing test taking anxiety.

**Being well prepared for the test is the best way to reduce test taking anxiety.**

**Space out your studying over a few days or weeks and continually review class material. Don't try to learn everything the night before.**

**Try to maintain a positive attitude while preparing for the test and during the test.**

**Exercising for a few days before the test will help reduce stress.**

**Make sure you get your rest** Make sure you will be comfortable and alert on the day of the test. Get a good night's sleep the night before.

**Dress in layers** Dress comfortably in layers so that you can take clothes off or put them on, depending on the temperature of the room.

**Eat a healthy breakfast**

Nutrition also influences how well children do on test; a good breakfast is important, but a large meal right before the test can be distracting and make you sleepy.

**Pack a snack** Even if you don't normally have a snack time during the school day, you may be allowed to have one if there's a break during the test. Pack a light nutritious snack, but avoid salty foods that may make you thirsty later in the testing session.

**Show up to class early so you won't have to worry about being late.**

**Chew gum (if allowed) during the test to help relieve test anxiety.**

**Stay relaxed, if you begin to get nervous take a few deep breaths slowly to relax yourself and then get back to work.**

**Read the directions slowly and carefully.**

**If you don't understand the directions on the test, ask the teacher to explain it to you.**

**Skim through the test so that you have a good idea how to pace yourself.**

**Write down important formulas, facts, definitions and/or keywords in the margin first so you won't worry about forgetting them.**

**Do the simple questions first to help build up your confidence for the harder questions.**

**Don't worry about how fast other people finish their test; just concentrate on your own test.**

**If you don't know an answer to a question skip it for the time being (come back to it later if you have time), and remember that you don't have to always get every question right to do well on the test.**

**Focus on the question at hand. Don't let your mind wander on other things.**

**If you're still experiencing extreme test anxiety after following these tips, Remember to Take a deep breath.** If you are a very nervous test-taker, do deep breathing exercises before the test. You can take a deep breath and count to ten. Then take shorter deep breaths in between passages or sections of the test -- counting to three only. This exercise is fast and simple, but it really works! If you have test anxiety, keep reading for information on relaxation and visualization exercises you can practice to help calm yourself before stressful situations, like taking a test. If none of these techniques work for you, **seek help from your school counselor.**

**Test Taking Tips for Parents**

<http://www.testtakingtips.com/parents/index.htm>

The following tips will provide suggestions for parents on how to approach test taking with their kids.

Make sure that your child does all their homework and reading assignments, this will help make sure your child is prepared for the test.

Encourage your child to space out their studying and homework assignments so that they won't be forced to cram on the night before the test.

If you are anxious about your child's test, it's ok but try to keep cool around your child, you don't want them to get anxious about their tests too.

Encourage your child to do well but don't pressure him/her. You may stress him/her out. It is important for your child to stay relaxed for the test.

Keep a positive attitude about tests.

Provide a quiet, well lighted area with little distractions to help your child study efficiently.

Mark down test days on your calendar so you and your child are both aware of testing dates.

Let your child relax for a few hours before bedtime, it can be stressful for a child to study all night.

Make sure that your child gets enough sleep on the night before the test.

Ensure that your child eats a healthy breakfast and avoid heavy foods that may make him/her groggy and avoid high sugar foods that may make him/her hyper.

Make sure that your child gets up early enough so that he/she will be on time to school.

Talking about the test with your child can relieve stress about test taking.

If your child is struggling on their tests, talk to them about it and meet with their teacher to find out the best way to help your child.

Praise/reward your child when they do well on a test or for their hard work preparing for a test.

Encourage them to do better if they don't do well.

Review the test with your child after they have taken it and go over any mistakes they have made and make sure that they understand what they did wrong and how they can improve for the next test.

**TAKING THE STRESS OUT OF TEST DAY**

<http://www.greatschools.org/students/academic-skills/230-managing-test-taking-stress.gs?page=2>

**Teach relaxation techniques (SEE BELOW)**

"My son sometimes has problems with stressing on the day of a big test. I've found the best remedy is to have him clear his head of all the distractions or negative thoughts and take deep, relaxing breaths. And to focus on doing his best and not worrying about what grade he will achieve."

**Clear minds with mint**

"I've read that Peppermint helps to relieve stress, and it helps the brain to concentrate."

**Instill confidence in your kid**

"I tell my child to do the best he can. I tell him how well he is prepared for the test. I always try to keep his spirits up.... I also give him tips like not to rush with the answers and to stay calm."

**Ease anxiety with exercise and sleep**

"We go over information each night that might be on the test. The night before the test, we do a little swimming or take a walk. This gives their bodies a little stress break as well as their minds. They get a good night's rest and always a good breakfast."

**DEALING WITH TEST ANXIETY**

<http://www.ctl.ua.edu/ctlstudyaids/studyskillsflyers/testpreparation/testanxiety.htm>

Everyone should feel somewhat anxious before they begin to take a test. Anxiety becomes a problem when it begins to interfere with a student's ability to think logically or remember facts. Physical symptoms of real test anxiety include tense muscles, sweaty palms, a pounding heart, and feeling faint or nauseous. Other symptoms include the inability to remember simple things, illogical thinking, and mental blocks.

Techniques must be practiced ahead of time to really work. There is no magic cure for test anxiety; overcoming it requires practice and persistence.

**1.   Relaxation**

A state of anxiety is incompatible with a state of relaxation, so training in relaxation techniques is by far the most commonly recommended treatment for dealing with any type of anxiety. Systematic relaxation and desensitization have been used successfully by psychologists for many years. These procedures involve only learning two things: Learning to relax all of your muscles, and while you are relaxed imagining the anxiety producing situation. The procedure is outlined below. For a more thorough discussion refer to one of the books listed as references at the end of this handout.

The relaxation procedure involves systematically tensing and then relaxing different groups of muscles in your body:

a.    Begin by either sitting in a comfortable chair or lying down. Move your arms toward the center of your body and bend both arms at the elbow. Tighten your hands into fists and simultaneously tense the muscles in your upper arms and shoulders. Hold for ten seconds and then relax for fifteen to twenty seconds.

b.    Tense your face muscles by wrinkling your forehead and cheek muscles. Hold for ten seconds then relax.

c.    Tense the muscles in your chest for fifteen seconds and then relax. Repeat this procedure for all the different parts of your body while telling yourself that you are becoming more and more relaxed. Pay particular attention to the muscles in your neck and back since these muscles become tense easily.

d.    After ten or fifteen minutes you will find that your body is completely relaxed.

If you practice this technique over a period of weeks you will find that it becomes easier and easier to achieve a state of complete relaxation.

**2.   Visualization**

While you are in a state of complete relaxation you then need to begin to visualize yourself in situations that tend to produce anxiety. For example, while you are relaxed, imagine yourself the night before the test. If this does not produce anxiety, then imagine yourself the morning of the test or walking to the room where the test will be given. If any of these images begins to produce anxiety, you will need to practice your relaxation techniques and calm yourself back down. Eventually you should get to the point where you can imagine yourself actually taking the test while remaining completely relaxed.

This technique has been shown to be better than 90% effective if it is used properly, however, they need to be practiced for several weeks to be really effective. You cannot wait until you experience an episode of test anxiety and then try to relax. It will not work..