

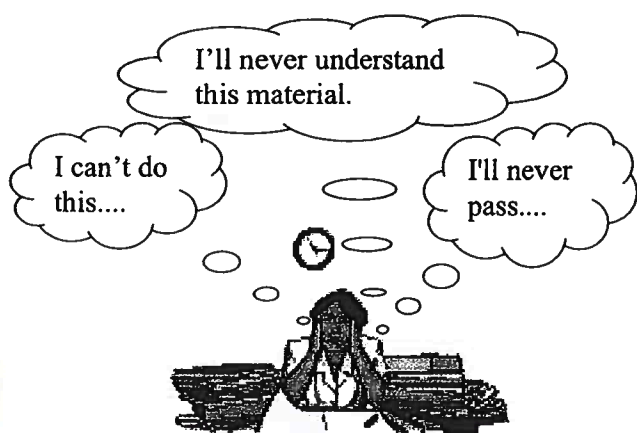
DEALING WITH TEST ANXIETY

Generally, we all experience some level of nervousness or tension when taking tests. A little nervousness can actually help motivate us to do better; however, too much of it can interfere with our ability to prepare and perform on a test. This is what we refer to as test anxiety. Here are five tips to help you calm your test anxiety.

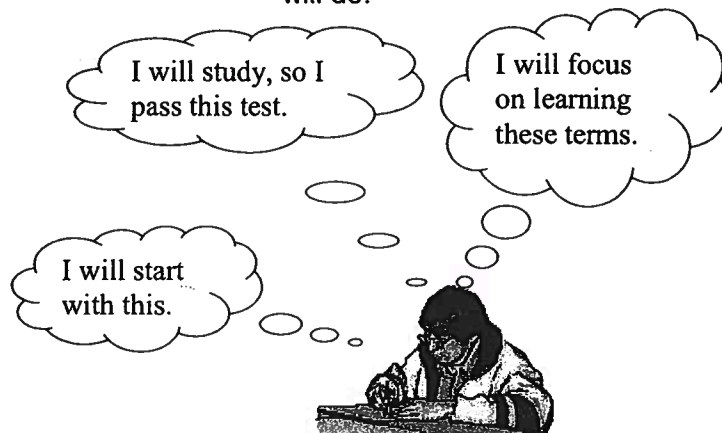
Before the test...

Monitor your self-talk

Be aware of what you are telling yourself. Listen to your inner dialogue about test taking and challenge negative thoughts by changing them into positive self-talk.



Positive self-talk focuses on what you want and what you will do.



Practice controlled breathing and muscle relaxation

Deep breathing and relaxation calms anxiety. Practice these exercises **before** you feel anxious, so you can learn to relax when you need to the most, such as when taking a test.

Steps to controlled breathing

1. Close your eyes.
2. Inhale slowly to the count of three.
3. Hold your breath to the count of three.
4. Exhale slowly to the count of three.
5. Count to three before the next inhale.
6. Repeat the cycle several times.

Steps toward muscle relaxation

1. Contract your hands into fists and hold to the count of three.
2. Now, relax hands until they are limp. Focus on the feeling of relaxation.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 with various parts of your body, beginning with your shoulders. Note: when contracting your legs push out with the heel to avoid cramping.
4. Do this until you feel calm.

The above three methods are highly effective when combined!

Before the test continued

Desensitize yourself to the fear response

Desensitization works best if you can imitate the test environment.

1. Ask your instructor if he/she could provide a practice test. If a practice test is not available, make your own or use the questions at the end of the chapter.
2. If possible, practice the test in the classroom or in a place similar to the one where you will be taking your actual test.
3. Practice working with time limits. Set an alarm clock and work only until it rings.
4. If you begin to feel anxiety, practice using positive self-talk, slow breathing, and muscle relaxation to calm down and refocus on the test.
5. Take tests whenever you have the opportunity, even though you may feel uncomfortable.

Prepare, Prepare, and Prepare

Preparation is essential for successful test taking. When you are dealing with test anxiety, over-preparing will help you more easily access the information you need. Refer to the handouts on Test Preparation, various test taking methods, and Tips for Taking Tests available in the Study Skills Lab LRC-212

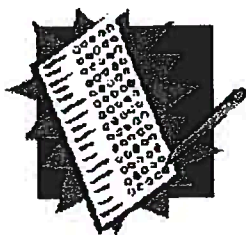
The key words in the question are cognitive development.



During the test...

Direct your attention to the test

The best strategy for successful test taking is directing your attention to the test. If you are thinking about how you feel, then you are not using your brain to answer the questions. There are five strategies that will help you direct your focus on the test.



1. **Recognize** when you are tense or not focused on the test
2. **Relax** by using the breathing and muscle relaxation methods you have been practicing.
3. **Redirect your attention** to the test, calmly and effectively.
4. **Focus on understanding** exactly what the question asks.
5. **Use test-taking strategies.** For example, look for clues to the answer in other parts of the test. For more ideas, see the handout Test Taking Strategies in the Study Skills Lab, LRC 212.