

# **Surviving College 101**

## **Test Anxiety Student Workbook**



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## **Test Anxiety 101**

Welcome to Test Anxiety 101. The goal of this workshop is to introduce you to the facts about test anxiety, help you to understand your own experience with test anxiety, and learn strategies to reduce test anxiety.

### **What is Test Anxiety?**

Test anxiety is the excessive worry, tension, and physical arousal that occurs in response to the specific circumstances that surround examinations. 15% of the college population has test anxiety.

#### **Physical Symptoms:**

- Headaches
- Dry Mouth
- Increased heart rate
- Perspiration
- Restlessness
- Fidgetiness
- Diarrhea

#### **Cognitive Symptoms:**

- Feelings of your mind going blank
- Inflexible thinking: "I have to do well; I must get all the answers right"
- Catastrophic thinking: "I'm going to fail out of college if I fail this test"
- Performance on exam can be connected to self-worth. "I'm no good if I can't get a good grade on this test"

#### **Test anxious people are...**

- More easily distracted by minor noises
- Less attentive to test taking and overfocused on insignificant and test irrelevant matters
- Oversensitivity to time: Clock watching and feeling like "I do not have enough time"

Test anxiety **does** interfere with performance. Test scores and grade point average are often lowered. These grades do not accurately reflect a person's capabilities.

### **Two Main Components of Test Anxiety: Worry & Emotionality**

**Worry:** The thinking part. Excessive concern about performance and the negative results that will follow an unacceptable performance. Directly interferes with memory, concentration and attention, triggers the physical response, and plays the major role in the maintenance of test anxiety. Worry remains constant throughout the exam. It can continue at a high level after because exam results are unknown.

**Emotionality:** The physical and emotional component. This includes the bodily reactions that come from arousal of the autonomic nervous system and the associated feelings of tension, nervousness, and apprehension. It peaks immediately before the test because of external cues (the classroom, the physical exam, time) that signal the beginning of the exam. It begins to decrease as the test taker starts to turn their attention more towards the exam itself.

### **What causes Test Anxiety**

There is wide agreement among researchers that test anxiety is learned condition.

- Fear of negative reactions of adults
- High parental expectations and dissatisfaction when children do not meet them
- Classes/classrooms where competition for grades is emphasized can be a source of tension for students who are unsure of their abilities.

### **Five R's for Conquering Test Anxiety**

The five R's for conquering test anxiety are **Recognize Rethink Refocus Relax and Refine**. These are drawn from many research studies that have identified what is effective for test anxious students. Each R will be introduced in a step-by-step manner.

#### **Recognize**

The core of test anxiety lies in negative thoughts. Therefore, you must be able to identify your thoughts.

The first step is recognizing the thoughts that result in you being anxious. Ask yourself:  
*What am I thinking when I am feeling anxious about a test?*

*Examples of anxious thoughts: "I don't know all the material." "I'm stupid." "My mind is going to go blank!"*

If you are having trouble with identifying your anxious thoughts here are five ways to recognize the thoughts you are having:

1. *Imagine yourself preparing for a test. Picture yourself as you are studying or reviewing for a test. What are you thinking? Write down the each of the thoughts you have.*
2. *Imagine yourself taking a test. Picture yourself in the test-taking situation. What are you thinking? Write down your thoughts.*
3. *Talk to others about taking a test. Listen to what you are saying to them.*

4. *Listen to others as they talk about test. What statement (thoughts) do they make? Record those where you find yourself saying, "Me too" or "I've had that thought."*
5. *Read the list of thoughts below that are typical for test anxious persons. Put a check next to the ones that "ring your bell".*

### **Common Test Anxious Thoughts**

- I'm going to fail
- I'm stupid.
- My family and instructors are going to be going to be really upset with me.
- My career plans are ruined.
- This test is an evaluation of me.
- I have to get a high score on this test.
- I don't know all the material.
- Everyone knows more than I do.
- I didn't do well on the last test and the next one is just like.
- I don't know the answer.
- There are "trick" questions.
- I should have studied longer, harder, more. (I didn't study enough)
- My mind has gone completely blank.
- I can feel my heart beating, my head aches, and my palms are sweating.
- I'm running out of time.
- Others are already finishing the test.
- I blew that test, I failed.
- I don't belong here, I'm not smart enough.
- There is no use in trying anymore.

It is important for you to be able to hear or catch your thoughts as you are having them, like turning up the volume on your thoughts. When you do that you can get into a good position to intentionally change your negative thoughts, substitute for positive thoughts and increase your focus on test-relevant thoughts.

Awareness of your thoughts is essential but, by itself it isn't likely to change anything. What do you do next? This is where the second step comes in, where you will learn to **Rethink** your thoughts.

### **Rethink**

The second step is to do something about the negative thoughts after you recognizing them.

Saying "STOP thinking like that" is not effective. Actively challenging or disputing those thoughts in a rational and logical way is necessary for you to alter them. Then as an added measure you can replace them with other thoughts that are more realistic and directly related to the task of taking the test. Your test anxiety can be alleviated with some believable assurance that you will do well.

## **Thinking Errors**

To rethink test anxious thoughts is to learn to think more rationally in a manner that fits with the facts. Everyone commits thinking errors (also called cognitive distortions) at times, in fact they are so common we have names for the most common errors.

Even a person that has little test anxiety may experience some distorted thinking, but their thoughts are outweighed by beneficial ways of thinking. Therefore, in your attempt to explore your thoughts, do not expect to rid yourself of all negative thoughts; instead, look forward to a shift to a more balanced perspective in which your beneficial ways of thinking can outweigh the negative.

Most people tend to use certain distortions more than others. Take a look a look at the common distortions below and put a star next to the ones that you commonly make.

<b><i>Common Cognitive Distortions (Unhelpful Thinking Styles)</i></b>	
<b>All or Nothing Thinking:</b> thinking in absolute, black and white categories	<b>Over-generalizing:</b> seeing a pattern based upon a single event or being overly broad in conclusions we draw
<b>Mental Filter:</b> only paying attention to certain types of evidence (e.g., dwelling on the negatives)	<b>Disqualifying the positive:</b> discounting the good things that have happened
<b>Jumping to Conclusions:</b> <b>Mind reading:</b> imagining we know what others are thinking <b>Fortune telling:</b> predicting the future	<b>Magnification (catastrophizing) and minimization:</b> blowing things out of proportion or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important
<b>Emotional Reasoning:</b> assuming because we feel a certain way, what we think must be true	<b>Should/Must Thinking:</b> Using words like “should”, “must”, “ought to” or “have to”
<b>Labeling:</b> assigning labels to ourselves or others	<b>Personalization:</b> blaming yourself for something you weren’t entirely responsible for OR blaming others and overlooking ways you may have contributed to the outcome

Now that you have identified the common thinking errors you typically make let’s focus on reframing them to more beneficial ways of thinking. Whenever we recognize an anxiety-related thought, feeling or behavior, it can be very helpful to ask ourselves the following questions:

1. *What are other ways of looking at this situation?*
2. *Am I looking at the whole picture?*
3. *What might be a more helpful way of picturing this situation?*
4. *What unhelpful thinking styles might I be using here (see above)?*

5. *What is the evidence that my thoughts are true? Is there an alternative way of thinking about this situation that is more true?*
6. *What is the probability that my thoughts will happen? What are some other things that could happen that are equally, if not more, probable?*
7. *Have I had any experiences in the past that suggests that this thought might not be COMPLETELY true ALL of the time?*
8. *Can I really predict the future? Is it helpful to try? What is more helpful?*
9. *Am I exaggerating how bad the result might be? What is more realistic?*
10. *Can I read people's minds? What else might they be thinking (that's not so negative)?*
11. *If a friend or loved one were in this situation and had this thought, what would I tell them?*

It is helpful to detect cognitive distortions while they are occurring. Examine your thoughts as you completing this session. What are they? Are you thinking that this program will work? Are your expectations positive? Are you predicting failure or creating reasons why you will not have time to implement these strategies? What (if any) distortion are you currently making? Can you use the guiding questions above to replace your thought with a more helpful one?

### Refocus

The third step is to **Refocus**. To do your best on an exam you must concentrate on preparation and keep your attention on answering the test questions. **Refocus** means putting your attention back where it belongs on the exam.

Test anxious persons are distracted by their test-irrelevant thoughts. Your focus shifts from test-taking to worries about the future and the negative consequences of a poor test performance. Learning how to apply the second **R**, **Rethink**, is great at turning your attention back to the test. **Refocus** then, involves directing your attention to the task of test-taking. This involves a number of behaviors or actions you can take. Some actions are in the hours and days leading up to the exam while others you can employ during the test itself.

**Refocusing** helps you get back on track to do the best on your test.

When you are **Refocusing**, you are asking yourself "*What can I do that will help me to perform my best?*" Below you will find a list of suggestions to help you get back on track. Many of the suggestions that we have listed you have probably done before—and if they have worked in the past then they can be effective again. Other suggestions we provide may be new or maybe you haven't thought of them being as helpful in test performance.

### **Before the exam:**

- *Review the material you know least well*
- *Talk with an instructor or TA*

- Use a test preparation guide
- Examine your old test if they are available: Learn what you did well and correct your mistakes
- Make a list of recent exam successes
- Make a study schedule

**During the exam:**

- Move on quickly to the next question when you don't know an answer
- Focus on what you have learned and are able to do rather than dwell on the unknown and what you are unable to do know
- On an objective exam (multiple choice) eliminate the choices you can and return to the question later to reduce guessing.
- Try to make a response to each item. Something is usually better than nothing.
- Trust your judgement. If an answer seems clear or obvious the chances are that it is probably what appears to be.
- Take a few calming breaths and then turn your attention back to the exam.
- Ask for clarification if a question is confusing
- Devote your attention to the test and not the clock
- IF you cannot complete the entire test, focus first on the remaining questions that are worth the most points

The ability to **Refocus** is essential to sound test performance. You will continue to encounter a variety of distractions but if you keep them to a minimum, reduce the time you give to them, and return to the task of test-taking, you can find success!

**Examples of How to Apply the first 3Rs to Anxious Thoughts**

Take a look at the examples of how to apply the first 3R's below. In the blank spaces at the bottom complete the exercise for your own test anxious thoughts.

Recognize <i>test anxious thought</i>	Rethink	Refocus
This test is an evaluation of me.	<i>Thinking Error:</i> Labeling  <i>Replacement Thought:</i> A Test is measure of my knowledge, understanding, and skills, nothing more, nothing less	-Study. Prepare for the exam the best that you can. -Keep the test in its proper perspective. It is not a measure of your self-worth.
I'm going to fail.	<i>Thinking Error:</i> Catastrophizing	-Review material. Make preparations to succeed.



	<i>Replacement Thought:</i> I will do the best that I can.	-Examine old tests. Fix mistakes and identify where you did well
I'm stupid.	<i>Thinking Error:</i> Labeling  <i>Replacement Thought:</i> I've been successful in this class in the past and have showed mastery in the material.	-Identify the material you do understand. -Give yourself positive encouragement around the knowledge of the material that you already have -Get assistance

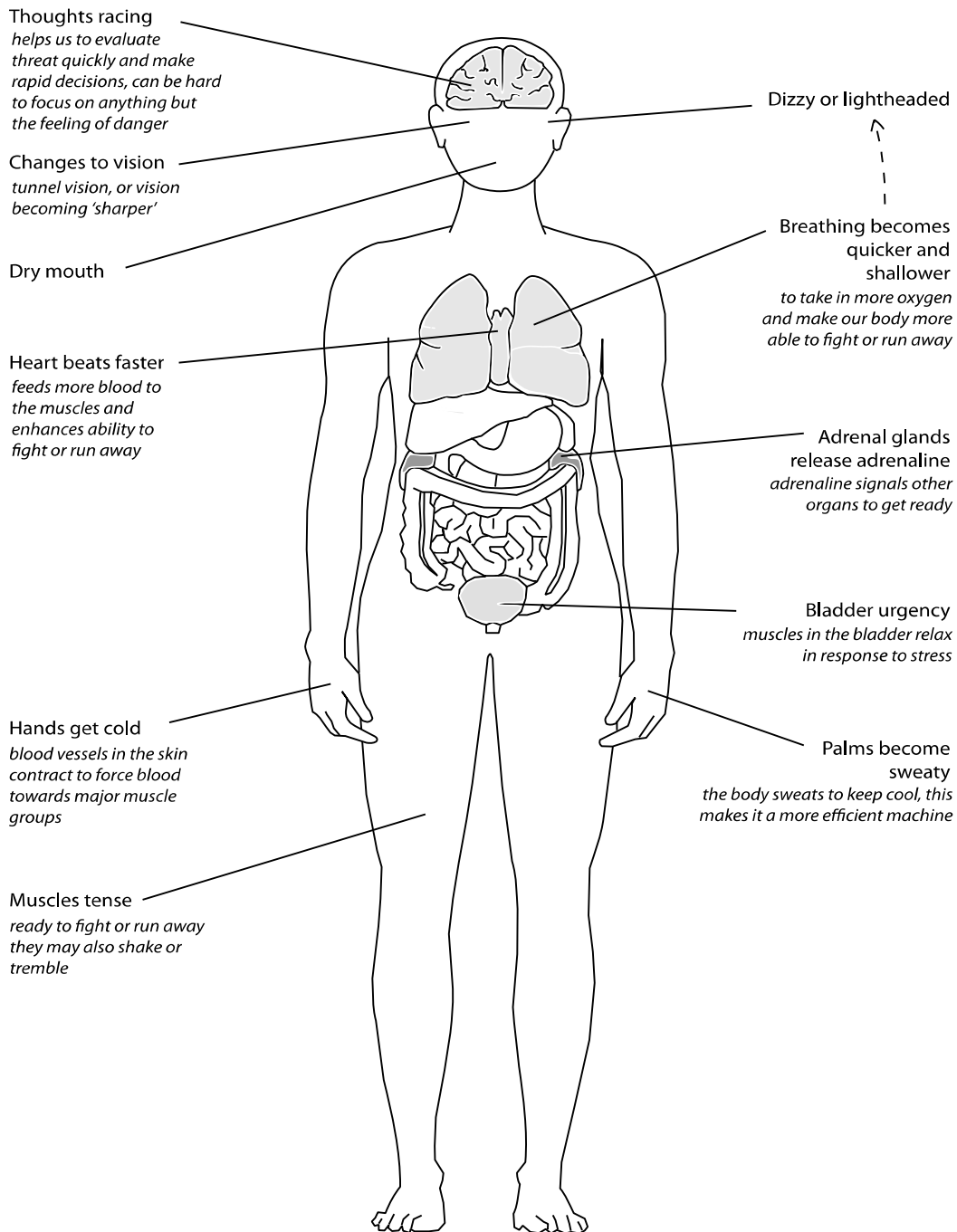
**Relax**

The first three **R**'s were directed to the cognitive component—worry—of test anxiety. The fourth **R: Relax** is the critical step in managing the emotionality component.

Your body is designed to quickly prepare for action under conditions that you perceive to be threatening (fight/flight/freeze response). A test of course is not life threatening. However, the mind and body work together in such a way that your body's first reaction to a threat will be the same whether or not your life is actually in danger. The threat you faced with an exam is not a physical one that could affect your survival but rather a threat to your psychological well-being—*you are going to fail an exam and some terrible consequences will follow*. Your overall state when you view an exam as dangerous can be described as tension. The physiological evidence is clear that a person cannot be tense and relax at the same time. Therefore, coping with tension in its physical form requires that you be able to relax. Before we learn strategies to help your body begin to relax it's important to understand what's going on in your body. Understanding your body's responses can help you to correctly interpret them, reduce alarm, and choose appropriate actions. Let's take a look at the biological responses when you are feeling anxious on the next page.

## Threat System (Fight or Flight)

The 'fight or flight' response gets the body ready to fight or run away. Once a threat is detected your body responds automatically. All of the changes happen for good reasons, but may be experienced as uncomfortable when they happen in 'safe' situations.



An increased awareness of your body and the signals it provides is an important part of relaxation. Such awareness allows you to tell the difference between relaxation and varying degrees of tension. When tension is extreme, bodily signals are so strong that even the most unaware person will notice them. However, with greater sensory awareness, you can catch tension at lower levels of intensity and then respond in two important ways: by using relaxation techniques and changing your thoughts.

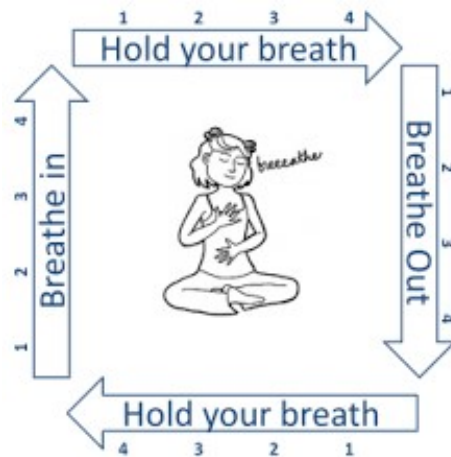
For most people telling yourself to “*relax, relax*” or “*Calm down*” does not work. To handle the physical component of test anxiety we will introduce simple relaxation strategies to address these symptoms. Take a look at the techniques on the follow pages putting a star next to the ones that you would like to try/think will work for you.

<b>Short Relaxation Techniques: When you only have a few minutes</b>	
Correct Breathing	Learn to always breathe using the diaphragm. Let the breath reach the bottom of the lungs, and let the chest and shoulders relax. High, shallow chest breathing is stressful and gives messages of stress to the brain.
Three-Part Breathing	Take a deep breath and imagine the lungs divided into three parts. Visualize the lowest part of the lungs filling with air; the chest should remain relatively still. Imagine the middle part of the lungs filling; visualize the rib cage expanding. Visualize the upper part filling with air as your shoulders rise slight and over backward. Exhale fully and completely; drop your shoulders, feel your rib cage contract, and force every bit of air from the bottom of the lungs. Repeat.
Stretching	Gently roll your head and shoulders many times a day. Also, gently stretch other areas of the body that may need it.
Tense-Relax Muscles	Tighten the muscles you want to relax and feel the tension. Let the muscles become loose and limp and feel the relaxation.
Body Scan	With your mind, briefly scan every muscle in your body from your toes to your head. Release any tension with a relaxing breath. Correct your posture and relax all the muscles you are not using.
Jaw Drop	Be aware of any tightness in your jaw. Allow your jaw to loosen by separating your teeth.
Heaviness and Warmth in Hands & Arms	Relax your body and feel heaviness in your arms and hands. Imagine a warmth flowing through them. Imagine and experiences your shoulders, arms, and hands becoming heavy, relaxed, and warm.

Mind-Quieting Meditation	Begin by focusing on your breathing. Use a special phrase that helps you focus on relaxation, and quiet your mind.
Attitudes & Perceptions	Pay attention to your perceptions and attitudes. Allow yourself to put a stress-reducing “frame” around the stressor. Remember, stress affects the body based on your perceptions of the outside world.

### **Square Breathing**

1. Place one hand on our stomach and one on our chest. You want to feel the hand on our stomach move in and out more than the hand on our chest.
2. Take a deep breath in through your nose. As you inhale you count in your mind 1...2...3...4 and you imagine using the air you breathe in to push against your hand on your stomach.
3. Hold for a count of 4. Then you exhale through your mouth like you are blowing out a candle.
4. Exhale for a count of 1...2...3...4
5. Pause for a count of 4 before starting again.



## **Breath-Counting Exercise**

This exercise focuses on the use of counting with the rhythm of the breath. Start with a short period of time and gradually increase the time. Set a timer so that you do not have to worry about when to stop.

1. Find a comfortable position. Take several deep breaths and settle into yourself. You may either close your eyes or keep them open, depending on your own comfort. If you keep them open, fix them on an object or a spot on the floor about four feet in front of you. Your eyes may be either focused or unfocused.
2. Take deep, comfortable breaths. Notice your inhalation. The pause between inhaling and exhaling, your exhalation, and the pause before starting again.
3. As you inhale, count, "one..." As you exhale, count, "two..." Inhale, "three..." Exhale, "four..." Continue until you reach 10 then start over.
4. If you lose count, simply begin with "one" on your next inhalation.
5. If you notice your mind has wandered, gently notice this, and return your focus back to counting your breath

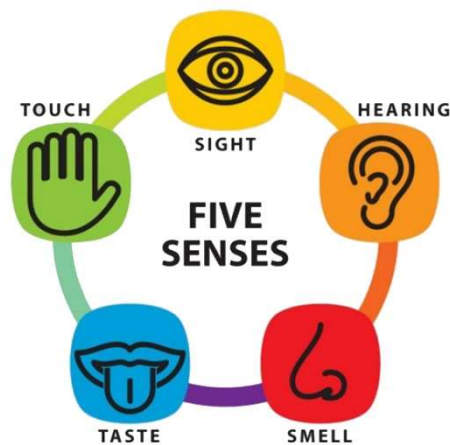
## **Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script**

- Sit back or, when you are at home, lie down in a comfortable position. Shut your eyes if you're comfortable doing so; if not, soften your gaze on a fixed point.
- Start by taking a deep breath and noticing the feeling of air filling your lungs. Hold your breath for a few seconds. One.....two....three... Release the breath slowly and let the tension leave your body.
- Now, take another deep breath and hold it. One.....two....three.... Slowly release the air.
- Even slower now, take another breath in. Fill your lungs and hold the breath. One.....two....three. Slowly release the breath and imagine the feeling of tension leaving your body with each breath out.
- We are going to begin progressively tensing and releasing our muscles. Let's start by clenching our fists, tighter and tighter. Hold. Study the tension in your fists, wrists and forearms as you hold the clenched fist. *(5 second pause)*. Now let go and relax your hands. Feel the looseness in your hands and notice the contrast between the tension and the feeling of relaxation. *(5 second pause)*
- Now bend your elbows and tense your biceps. Tense them as hard as you can and observe the feeling of tautness. Hold. *(5 second pause)*. Okay, relax. Straighten out your arms. Notice the feeling of relaxation in your hands, arms, and shoulders. Notice how your arms feel limp and at ease. *(5 second pause)*
- Okay, let's turn our attention to our head. Wrinkle your forehead as tight as you can. Hold. *(5 second pause)* Now relax and smooth it out. *(5 second pause)*

- Now close your eyes, squint them tighter. Feel the tension. *(5 second pause)*. Now, relax your eyes. Let them remain closed gently and comfortably. *(5 second pause)*
- Okay, still focusing on our heads, roll your head to the right and feel the changing locus of stress, roll it to the left. *(5 second pause)*
- Straighten your head and bring it forward. Press your chin against your chest. Feel the tension in your throat, the back of your neck. Hold. *(5 second pause)* Relax, allowing your head to return to a comfortable position. Let the relaxation deepen. *(5 second pause)*
- Next, tense the muscles in your back by bringing your shoulders together behind you. Hold them tightly. Tense them as hard as you can without straining and keep holding *(5 second pause)*. Now let go. Release the tension from your back. Feel the tension slowly leaving your body, and the new feeling of relaxation. Notice how different your body feels when you allow it to relax. *(5 second pause)*
- Now shrug your shoulders up to your ears and hold. *(5 second pause)* Relax your shoulders. Drop them back and feel the relaxation spreading through your neck, throat and shoulders. Give your body a chance to relax. Feel the comfort and the heaviness. *(5 second pause)*
- Next, breathe in and fill your lungs completely. Hold your breath. Notice the tension. *(5 second pause)* Now exhale. Let the air hiss out and let your chest become loose. Continue relaxing, letting your breath come freely and gently. *(5 second pause)*
- Now tighten your buttocks and thighs. Squeeze your thighs as hard as you can and hold. *(5 second pause)*. Release. Feel the difference as you let go. *(5 second pause)*
- Now let's move our attention to the calves and feet. Press your toes downward, making your calves tense. Study the tension. *(5 second pause)*. Relax. *(5 second pause)*.
- Now bend your toes towards your face, creating tension in your shins. *(5 second pause)*. Relax again. *(5 second pause)*.
- Okay. Finally, tense your entire body. Tense your feet, legs, stomach, chest, arms, head, and neck. Tense hard, without straining. Hold the tension. *(5 second pause)*. Relax. Feel the looseness and heaviness throughout your body as the relaxation deepens. Let go more and more. Experience the relaxation deepening. Pay attention to the feeling of relaxation, and how different it is from the feeling of tension *(Wait 10 seconds)*.
- Begin to wake your body up by slowly moving your muscles. Adjust your arms and legs. Stretch your muscles and open your eyes when you're ready.

### “54321” Grounding Exercise

- Name 5 things you can see in the room with you.
- Name 4 things you can feel (tactile; e.g. “chair on my back” or “feet on floor”)
- Name 3 things you can hear right now
- Name 2 things you can smell right now
- Name 1 you can taste or 1 good thing about yourself



When practicing these techniques here a few key reminders to increase your level of success:

- Practice these techniques daily.
- Choose a consistent time each day that is free from distractions and calm. (Before bed is a great time because it can also help with difficulties falling asleep)
- Practice these strategies in a calm environment and consistently in order to increase your ability to access them when you are stressed/anxious.
- The more you practice these strategies the easier they will be to access when you are anxious.

### Relaxation During an Exam

Relaxation should be practiced on a daily basis to achieve lasting results. In the days prior to an exam, make it a point to practice at least twice a day. **Remember** that emotionality tends to be at its highest level near the beginning of an exam. It makes sense then to practice your relaxation in the minutes before you enter the testing site.

What should you do however if you become tense while you are taking an exam? It is impractical to stop what you are doing so you can engage in a 10 to 20 minute relaxation. In this situation you can draw upon breathing techniques. Bow your head and close your eyes or cover them with your hand. Quietly take three or four breaths. Focus on your breathing tuning out the unhelpful thoughts. This time-out can take only 20-30 seconds yet the resulting calmness can lead you to refocus to the task at hand. Repeat as often as needed throughout the exam. If this breathing technique is not helpful for you choose one from the short relaxation techniques handout above.

**Refine**

As we have emphasized in this training there is no substitute for knowing and comprehending the material to be covered on an exam. Repetition aids memory so preparing for an exam should involve a thorough review. A well-organized review eliminates the need to cram which is an anxiety inducing study method.

Refine means to sharpen your test-taking skills. These strategies that we will introduced are applicable regardless of the subject matter. We will break up the strategies into three categories: before, during, and after the exam.

Refine is introduced last because research suggests that you must have effectively dealt with the sources of your anxiety in order to sustain the attention and concentration that is needed to apply these test-taking strategies. **As a reminder these strategies are not intended to be shortcuts or substitutes for adequate preparation.**

<b>Before the Exam</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Obtain information about the exam. Learn as much about what the test will cover and about the types of questions (T/F, multiple choice, essay, short answer), number of questions, and time available.</li> <li>2. Review previous quizzes and tests assessing your strengths and weaknesses. Learn from your mistakes and improve in areas where you appear weakest. What types of questions do you do better at?</li> <li>3. Take care of your personal health needs. Get at least 8 hours of sleep the night before. Being fully rested will increase your alertness during the exam. Eat a nutritious meal in the hours before.</li> <li>4. Come to the test prepared. (Pens, calculator, book, notes, etc.)</li> <li>5. Be on time but do not arrive too early. Avoid conversations that get you caught up in the anxiety of other test takers.</li> <li>6. Maintain task relevant thinking when the instructor or classmates make discouraging comments (“this is going to be a difficult exam”)</li> </ol>
<b>During the Exam</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Look over the entire test before you answer any questions. Notice the types of questions, number of questions, and the distribution of points. This survey will allow you to mentally prepare for the task that is coming. It can help to reduce anxiety over the uncertainty of what lies ahead by providing some familiarity with the content and permitting you to plan on how to use your exam time.</li> </ol>



2. When there are formulas, charts, lists of facts, or equations that you have learned, but are worried that you will forget, write the information on the back of your test or in a corner of the answer sheet before you begin looking at the test. The material will be freshest in your mind at this time, and you can return to it if needed. Incidentally, this not cheating as some students view it, rather it is making good use of an honest option that is available to you.
3. Read all the directions and questions carefully. An anxious test taker may overlook, misread, jump to a conclusion or second guess directions and questions. Underline any important words in the directions and know their meanings. Terms like list, define, and compare require different responses. Make sure you are answering the question that is asked.
4. Use time wisely. Know how long you have to complete the exam. Will the instructor allow additional time for those who need it? Pace yourself if it is a timed test but do not be a clock watcher.
5. Observe the point system. Devote more time to the items that have the highest point value since they constitute a larger percentage of your score.
6. Take the test one item at a time. Don't let the whole test overwhelm you. Do the easy items first, answer all those you know, to build your confidence early in the exam. If you know but can't recall the answer to a question, leave it and come back to it later. Guess if there is no penalty for guessing. IF you can eliminate any choices as incorrect then wild guessing will be reduced.
7. After completion of the test, use any time remaining to reconsider and improve your answers. Do not be afraid to change answers if it seems desirable. Research evidence consistently indicates test takers will on average gain more points than they lose when they change their answers. Reasons for this improvement include when you reread an item you might understand the question better and rethinking and conceptualizing might lead to a new answer.

Objective Exam Strategies:

(Objective exams are those composed of multiple choice, T/F, & matching)

1. Anticipate the answer then look for it. Don't look at the given answers until you have tried to provide your own answer.
2. Consider all the alternatives before making a response. Again, it can be a sign of anxiety to select the very first answer that looks good. Carefully reading the alternatives is especially important when answering multiple choice items with responses that contain two answers (e.g., both a & b, both a & C). The extra attention to detail is necessary because such answers require you to make some fine discriminations.
3. Use information obtained from other questions and options. Sometimes such information will jog your memory. There may be cues that will aid you in recognition.
4. Do not rely on flaws in test construction such as the length of the answer, a balanced distribution of responses (e.g. there will be as many a and b answers), grammar etc. Instructors and test writers are aware of such peculiarities and have tended to eliminate them. Again, there is no substitute for knowing the material in the first place.
5. Watch for special words as you read the test questions. Absolutes such as always and never are often used to make T/F items false. Qualifiers such as maybe, usually, mainly are often used to make T/F items true.

	<p>6. Don't spend too much time on any one question. On a multiple-choice item, if you don't know the answer but can eliminate one or more of the choices, then cross them out and move on. When you return to the question later you won't have to waste time re-reading alternatives you have already eliminated.</p> <p>7. Keep from losing your place on tests that are given with separate answer sheets. Make certain that you entered your answer after the right number. If you skip 17 then be sure you enter your answer to the next question after on line 18. Spot check to make sure all questions are answered only once when skipping questions. Check your answer sheet against question numbers about every 10 items. To have all your right answers off by one question could mean a score of 40 instead of 85.</p> <p><b>Essay Exams</b></p> <p>1. Answers to essay questions must have relevance. Analyze the question, give what is asked for and no more. Test takers often resort to writing down everything, even if vaguely related hoping the instructor will find an acceptable answer somewhere in the verbiage.</p> <p>2. Understand the terms used in the question. For example, when you are asked to contrast two or more ideas you are expected to discuss how they are different and distinct. Compare, identify, examine, and define are terms that direct you on the form your answer should take. If you are asked to list certain points then provide a list; do not describe if that is not requested. Your answers will be relevant when you follow the question directions. If a term is not clear to you asked your instructor for clarification.</p> <p>3. Essay answers must be clear and well-organized. Write out a brief outline for each question before you begin to write. The small amount of time it takes to do this is well worth it. Think before you write. Develop logical structure and support for your position, use your reasoning ability, and avoid irrelevancies or tangents. Check your plan: have you include all pertinent material? Have you supported it well?</p> <p>4. Write your answers as you would a theme. Having a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning should restate the question and come straight to the point. The middle is where you explain, support, argue your point, etc. The end is where you sum everything up and provide the conclusion.</p> <p>5. Do not start on ideas which you are unsure of, particularly if you don't have any knowledge to back up your position. Answer as fully and clearly as you can. Vagueness and unsupported statements present an impression of uncertainty or unpreparedness.</p> <p>6. Leave space at the end of each question for additional information that may come into mind later. Use transitional phrases to blend the later additions with the earlier (e.g., in addition, furthermore, etc.)</p> <p>7. Budget your time and make use of the point system. If there is a shortage of time to complete the question, write in outline form any other relevant points you want to include. This practice will demonstrate that you do have additional knowledge of the topic.</p>
<b>After the Exam</b>	<p>1. Immediately following the exam relax and unwind. The test you have taken is over and there is nothing more you can do about it. Reward yourself for the work you put into preparing for the exam. Do something you enjoy: go to a movie, take a bike ride, give yourself the evening off.</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. When the test is returned, review all questions missed and determine why they were missed. Identify the correct answers and learn from you mistakes to help you on future exams.</li><li>3. Turn your attention to the next exam. Begin your preparation.</li></ol>
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### **Conclusion & Key to Success with the 5 Rs**

It is important to follow through with the 5 R's in a persistent and consistent manner. Be consistent but realistic with yourself and don't try to overcome anxiety in a day or even a week. Tell yourself that this will take some effort, but I am going to persist.

Remind + Reward = Success

- Remind yourself to practice the exercises every day
- Put a note card with the word practice or your alternative thoughts in an obvious place
- Reward yourself after you complete an exercise

Persist and we believe you will find that like many other test takers, the strategies presented can help you to overcome test anxiety. Remember that if you continue to struggle with your test anxiety you can request further support from CAPS by calling 479-575-5276. We wish you well as you work to overcome your test anxiety. Many others have succeeded, and you can too. Remember to relax, think positive, and believe that change is not only possible, it is likely!