

# Test Skills and Test Stress

Everyone gets stressed out by an exam sometimes. So, if you feel overwhelmed by an upcoming test, know that you're not alone. However, that doesn't mean that there is nothing that you can do to combat test stress. Try these techniques to clear your head and perform better on your next test!

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1. Study--slow and steady

You feel most confident when you know the material, and you learn best when you take it a little at a time. Start studying early to avoid stressful and ineffective cramming late in the game.

2. Prepare for success

Eat and sleep well. Take care of all your preparation (gathering pencils and scratch paper, testing Proctorio, etc.) the night before. And plan on arriving at your test 5-10 minutes early in case something goes wrong.

3. Scan and plan

When you get into the test, read over it quickly to see how many questions and sections there are. Make a rough time plan and spend your time where it will give you the most points.

4. Don't get stuck

Go through the test in order, but don't let yourself get stuck. Place a question mark next to problems where you are unsure and come back later to review.

5. Review, but don't overthink

When you finish, return to the questions you marked and make sure you picked the answers you meant to. Reread the questions to make sure you understood them correctly. But don't change your answer without a good reason. First instincts are often correct.

6. Get Credit

Answer every question, even if you have to guess. On multiple choice, pick the best answer. On work-out problems and essays, always write something. Give yourself every opportunity to earn partial credit.

7. Stay in the moment

It can be tempting to go into apocalyptic thinking during a test, but it's far more helpful to stay in the present. Focus on the here and now and worry about the future later.

8. Use stress management techniques

Depending on the length of your test, it can sometimes be worth it to pause a moment and ground yourself in order to improve your performance going forward. Just don't take more time than you can afford.

9. Breathe

Focus on your breathing to bring you back into your body. You can simply pay attention to it, or you can try a specific practice such as box breathing (breathe in for 4, hold for 4, exhale for 4, and hold for 4).

10. 5-4-3-2-1

Find 5 things that you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. Focusing on your senses brings you back to your body and to the present.

11. Move your body

Moving the body can be a powerful way of refocusing and releasing tension. Move your toes, stretch, tense and relax your muscles, lift and drop your shoulders, or roll your neck. Take a drink or bathroom break if you are allowed. Then return to your test.

12. Practice self-compassion

Whether or not you get the score you want, recognize that this does not define you as a person. Think of how you would treat a good friend who had this outcome and try to treat yourself the same way.

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