



# Test Anxiety

**BOISE STATE**  
UNIVERSITY  
Advising and Academic Enhancement

## What is Test Anxiety?

An overwhelming fear or apprehension about testing.

- **Physical Characteristics**  
Sweaty palms, faster heart rate, shallow breathing, upset stomach, vomiting, butterfly stomach, tense muscles, and unable to sleep.
- **Mental Characteristics**  
Feelings of apprehension, feelings of being unprepared, feelings of failure—unable to do it, can't do it, mind goes blank, unable to remember, and feelings of panic.
- **Emotional Characteristics**  
Failure, lonely, loser, and hopeless.

## How Can You Cope With It?

- **Be Prepared**  
Use our Seven-Day Study Guide to help you get organized and ready for the exam. You can also use a study checklist (study to-do list) and cross off everything that you've studied. Once you get to class you can feel confident that you have studied and have the ability to do well. Try not to cram, this only adds to the pressure of the exam and the feeling of time crunching.
- **Positive self-talk**  
Give yourself credit for what you have learned. Walk into the class saying to yourself "I will do well on this test," instead of a negative alternative. This is definitely easier said than done, but with practice positive thinking and self-talk does really help your nerves and attitude.
- **Time Management**  
Get organized for your exams. Use your syllabus to plan out your semester. Map it all out on a calendar so you're prepared for exams that might occur the same week.
- **Workshops**  
Take advantage of the free workshops on campus sponsored through Academic Support and the Counseling Center.
- **Nutrition**  
Your brain uses a lot of calories during an exam. Don't forget to eat your breakfast!
- **Sleep**  
Aim for at least six hours of sleep per night. Any thing less and sleep deprivation can drastically decrease your testing ability.
- **Exercise**  
This is a great way to get rid of some pent up anxiety. All full-time students can go to the REC Center for free.
- **Music**  
If you like to study while listening to music, listen to that same music right before your exam. Not only will it place your mind where it was when you were studying but also block out the negative and panicked messages from other students.
- **Have a plan**  
Expect that initial panic at the beginning of the test. Take a deep breath and let it pass. If you look at a question and you blank out, turn over the test, take a breath and start answering the questions from the back. Build your confidence back up and continue to do the best on your exam.
- **Breathing techniques**  
Take deep breaths, inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Concentrate on your breathing. This few seconds of mindful breathing will help you relax.
- **Learning to relax**  
Find ways to relax yourself before a test. Listen to music, use aromatherapy, practice deep breathing.



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# Relaxation Exercises

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## 4-7-8 Breathing

1. Sit Comfortably.
2. Align your back so that it is straight.
3. Relax your forehead.
4. Relax your eyebrows.
5. Relax your tongue.
6. Relax your neck.
7. Relax your shoulders.
8. Take a deep breath in.
9. Take a deep breath out.
10. Take another deep breath in while counting to 4.
11. Hold your breath for a 7 count.
12. Exhale while counting to 8.
13. Repeat 4 times.
14. Concentrate on the counting and not on all the chatter in your head.
15. Take a deep breath in and out.
16. Roll your shoulders and neck.
17. Finish with a deep breath in and exhale slowly.

## Alert Mind & Calm Body

1. Sit Comfortably.
2. Align your back so that it is straight.
3. Relax your forehead.
4. Relax your eyebrows.
5. Relax your tongue.
6. Relax your neck.
7. Relax your shoulders.
8. Take a deep breath in.
9. Take a deep breath out.
10. Take another deep breath in while saying to yourself “alert mind.”
11. Exhale all your breath and say to yourself “calm body.”
12. Repeat as desired.
13. Concentrate on the words and not on all the chatter in your head.
14. Feel your mind becoming alert and awake with each inhale.
15. Feel your body becoming calm and relaxed with each exhale.
16. Take a deep breath in, “alert mind,” and let it out, “calm body.”
17. Finish with a deep breath in and exhale all your tensions.

