

# Test Anxiety

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Test anxiety is a big problem with a lot of students. You know the material. You've studied for it well enough, but when you actually get into the situation, you panic or you choke and you really just can't produce the information on the spot.

Now, there are a lot of psychological techniques and a lot of books have been written about set test anxiety, so if this is your particular problem, I suggest seeking them out because figuring out psychological ways to control yourself in the testing situation will be really beneficial, probably more so than investing a lot of time in learning techniques. Because, if you do know the material and you're just choking or panicking on the test, then that is a bigger problem that you need to solve.

However, if you are in that situation and you encounter occasional test anxiety, there are two approaches that I've used and these two approaches in combination worked really well to help calm myself during a test.

The first is to create a very systematic plan for going through the test. One of the big problems with going through tests is that you encounter questions that you don't understand and you start panicking because you don't really have a systematic overview of how you're going to tackle the entire test. My general approach for going through tests is to read through it from cover to cover before I answer any question. Even if I know the question, I will read it through cover to cover. Spending five or ten minutes doing this is worth it, because it gives you a good overview of what you know and what you don't know so you have a very fair assessment of how you're going into it, rather than just panicking on an individual question.

Then, I go through and answer all the questions and I try to go on easy questions first and leave the hard ones later, especially if you're time-limited. Because if you're not going to finish the test, it's better that you have those marks that you knew you were going to get right away. And then, finally, to have a very systematic overview, so if you have answers for tests, to really deeply think about your answer with any remaining time.

So, this approach of going through tests in this three-layer strategy is not necessarily going to work for everyone and for every kind of test. But, what matters is that you have a plan going into the test. If you know exactly how you're going to handle the test, then that can brace you when you encounter questions or pieces of knowledge you don't quite understand.

If you have a solution so, if you put in a question and you can't answer it in more than five minutes, you'll move on to the next question, and you have that as a systematic rule, that system can reduce the anxiety, whereas if you don't have a system, you'll start panicking. And, train that system when you're doing the practice exams. So, don't just wait until the actual exam, but do it during your practice exams so you can get used to this habit of this systematic approach of going through it. The

next technique is just visualization, and visualization is not necessarily the most universal technique and it's not the most original technique, but it is one that can work very well.

So, what you do is before you go into the exam, you really visualize exactly your system that you're going to go through and you barely put in the emotions that you want to have in your visualization. So, you're going through, you're focused, you're attentive, but you're not panicking. And, if you can repeat this visualization where you walk through all the steps you're doing, sitting down, opening the exam, going through all the questions, you can imagine yourself going through a problem which you don't understand and then moving on to the next one, and then coming back and answering it. If you visualize the systematic process you're going through, then that can also create a calming effect when you're right in the actual exam situation.

So, if you do suffer from test anxiety, try doing those two things, creating a very systematic plan for handling the test and visualizing, walking yourself, going through it and the mental states you want to have in that situation so you can train those mental states. But also, invest time in looking at books and other resources on test anxiety. Test anxiety is not a covered material in this course. It's not something that we talk about a lot, but if it is something that is a big problem for you, you might want to get some good books and resources on that subject.