

Test Anxiety

Test anxiety, in and of itself, is not a disability that qualifies for academic accommodations. However, there are ways to work with text anxiety and be successful. MSU Counseling Center (ext. 4618) is an excellent resource if [Test Anxiety Management](#) strategies do not work for you.

The first step is to distinguish between two types of anxiety. If your anxiety is a direct result of lack of preparation, consider it a normal, rational reaction. However, if you are adequately prepared but still panic, “blank out”, and/or overreact, your reaction is not rational. While both of these anxieties may be considered normal (anyone can have them) it is certainly helpful to know how to overcome their effects.

What does test anxiety feel like?

- Some students experience mainly physical symptoms, such as headaches, nausea, faintness, feeling too hot or cold, etc.
- Others experience more emotional symptoms, such as crying easily, feeling irritable, or getting frustrated easily
- The major problem of test anxiety is usually its effect on thinking ability; it can cause you to blank out or have racing thoughts that are difficult to control.
- Although many students feel some level of anxiety when writing exams, most can cope with the anxiety and bring it down to a manageable level.

If you are not able to bring your anxiety to a manageable level, or if you consistently experience high levels of anxiety prior to and during tests and exams, you are strongly advised to seek assistance at MSU’s Counseling Center (<https://mwsu.edu/student-life/counseling/index>)

Controlling Test Anxiety

- Be well prepared for the test.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle: get enough sleep and set an alarm, good nutrition, exercise, some personal “down” time, and a reasonable amount of social interaction.
- As you anticipate the exam, think positively, e.g., “I can do OK on this exam. I’ve studied and I know this stuff.”
- Engage in “thought stopping” if you find you are worrying a lot, mentally comparing yourself to your peers, or thinking about what others may say about your performance on this exam.

- Before you go to bed on the night before the exam, make sure to collect together everything that you will need for the exam –pen, pencil, ruler, eraser, calculator, etc. Double-check the time and location of the exam.
- Get to the exam on time – not too late but not too early.
- Don't talk to the other students about the exam material just before going into the exam.
- Sit in a location in the exam room where you will be distracted as little as possible.
- As the papers are distributed, calm yourself down by taking some slow deep breaths.
- Make sure to carefully read any instructions on the exam.
- As you work on the exam, focus only on the exam, not on what other students are doing or on thinking about past exams or future goals.
- If you feel very anxious in the exam, take a few minutes to calm yourself down. Stretch your arms and legs and then relax them again. Do this a couple of times. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Do some positive internal self-talk; say to yourself, "I will be OK, I can do this." Then direct your focus on the questions; link questions to the corresponding lecture or chapter.
- If the exam is more difficult than you anticipated, try to focus and just do your best. It might be enough to get you through, even with a reasonable grade!
- When the exam is over, treat yourself. If you don't have any other commitments, maybe you can go to a movie with a friend. If you have to study for other exams, you may have to postpone a larger break, but a brief break may be the pickup that you need.

You can take control of test anxiety so that your performance on a test reflects your real standing in that course. If interfering levels of test anxiety persist, however, talk to a counselor for specialized help.