

Test-Taking Tips

Test anxiety can greatly influence your performance during an exam. The term "test anxiety" refers to the emotional reactions that some students have to exams. The fear of exams is not an irrational fear--after all, many college courses are grading heavily based off of exam performance. You aren't alone, and the SSC has resources to help you feel more confident before you take your next test.

Before Your Exam

- Early in the semester, collect information about the exams for your courses (i.e., the type of exam, date and location, where exam materials are drawn from, etc.)
- Pay special attention to things the professor says will be on the exam, and review class materials regularly to prevent a marathon review when exams roll around
- Use your old tests as study aids. Analyze your previous exams to gain a better understanding of which areas you need to work on for future exams
- Review more than you think you need to for the test. This will increase your confidence, and you will be able to answer test questions better, despite any test anxiety that may arise.
- Study with other students from your class. Have an organized agenda to compare perceptions of the main points and possible essay questions
- Remind yourself of past success. Think of a tough course in which you struggled, but eventually succeeded. Tell yourself that if you did well on that past exam, you can do well on the upcoming exam, too!

During Your Exam

- Arrive to class early so that you have time to glance over your notes and relax
- Try to avoid talking with other students right before the exam. Their apprehension and nervousness may inadvertently rub off on you
- Sit closer to the front of the room to avoid distractions
- Do not obsess about running out of time on the test. Check the time periodically, but avoid checking the time too frequently, as this may only make you more anxious.
- Read the directions for each section of the exam before you begin
- Complete the easier questions first so that you can keep moving on with the exam, and periodically check to make sure every question is answered.

Reviewing the Exam

- Make sure that there are no grading mistakes by reviewing your exam as soon as your professor returns it back to you
- Make sure that you understand your mistakes. Don't settle for the wrong answer; ask a classmate or the professor/your TA to help you understand what the correct answer is
- If your professor/TA reviews the test in class, be sure to take notes on what they wanted for an answer on the questions/problems that you got wrong
- If you aren't satisfied with your grade, attend your professor's office hours and see if there's a make-up exam or any extra credit you can complete
- Save the test as study material for a future cumulative exam