

# Feeling Less Anxious When Taking Tests

## Objective

To use breathing techniques to help you feel less anxious when taking tests

## You Should Know

Taking tests can be stressful, even when you've studied and prepared. Nearly every student worries about how they will do on an exam, no matter how confident they are that they know the material. But sometimes, normal worry can turn into something called test anxiety, which can make it impossible to concentrate and remember. Here are some of the symptoms. Have you experienced any of them?

- Physical symptoms including headache, fast heartbeat, shortness of breath, and nausea.
- Feeling overwhelmed and forgetting everything you studied.
- Negative thoughts, where you predict your failure of the exam.
- Second-guessing yourself as you answer questions, or changing your answers repeatedly.

Write down the common problems you have when you take a test.

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Are there other anxious symptoms that you have experienced before or during a test?

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## What to Do

There are things you can do to reduce your anxiety before a test, such as exercising to burn off excess energy, getting a good a night's sleep the night before, and, of course, being well-prepared for the test by studying and practicing.

During the exam itself, a breathing exercise can help relieve some of your anxiety. Follow these steps:

1. Breathe in through your nose as you count to 4.
2. Exhale through your mouth as you count to 8.
3. Repeat a positive statement to yourself, such as, "I can do this. I am prepared."

4. Visualize yourself finishing the test, feeling confident that you have done a good job.
5. Return your attention to the test.
6. Repeat this exercise again, if necessary.

Practice this breathing technique five or six times before the test, while studying or while doing your homework. Then, use the technique when you actually take the test. Use the chart below to write down changes that you notice while doing the breathing exercise.

<b>Date of Test</b>	<b>Type of Test</b>	<b>How I Feel Before the Breathing Exercise</b>	<b>How I Feel During the Exercise</b>	<b>How I Feel After the Exercise</b>

### **Reflections on This Exercise**

What other activities do you find helpful for relieving stress before taking tests?

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What are some other times you feel anxious that the breathing exercise might be useful?

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How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 = not very helpful, 5= moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

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