

MATH TEST ANXIETY

“A little anxiety before a test improves your concentration and alertness.

Excessive worry, or test anxiety, can lower your test score.”¹ Following are some tips on how you can learn to control math test anxiety.

Remember:

- Math is hard for EVERYONE at some point. Even your instructor, Einstein, and Pythagoras had to practice.
- Every student who takes a test feels some anxiety. You are not alone!
- Effective studying gives you confidence.

Before the Test:

- Ask the Instructor what material you need to know and what types of problems you should be able to do.
- Begin your review several days in advance.
- The night before do not stay up late. Budget your time that day so you can complete your review and still get a fair amount of sleep and rest.

Before the Test continued:

- Make your test-study time the last thing you do that night before the test. It will stay in your mind through the night.
- The morning of your test, pay attention to your nutritional needs. Have a good breakfast!
- Right before the test, do not be tempted to take a hasty look at your books or notes. It may add to your anxiety.

During the Test:

- Ignore what other students have to say before and during the test! Focus on what you know.
- Sit at the front of the room.
- Arrive a few minutes early.
- Read the instructions carefully before beginning the problems.
- Work on a familiar problem first.

During the Test continued:

- Show all your work.
- Watch out for careless errors.
- Watch out for negative self-talk, which includes things like telling yourself you can't do it. Instead, be confident and say to yourself, "I CAN!"
- Do not rush to leave the room when you are done. Instead, go through your test again and check for errors.

During the Test continued:

- Don't worry if others finish before you. Take your time. There is no prize for finishing first.
- Focus all your attention on the problem you are working. Do not let your feelings about a prior problem interfere with your performance on the current one.

After the Test:

- Congratulate yourself on having worked hard. Do not pay much attention to what other students say after a test.
- Make sure you know and understand your mistakes.
- Remember, hard work is as important as success.

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If you practice these tips and still feel tense, try the following relaxation techniques before, during, and after the test:

- Take a deep breath, hold it, and then slowly release the breath and the tension. Do this until you feel your body relax.
- Close your eyes and let your arms hang down at your sides. As you relax, visualize the tension from your head, neck, and shoulders flowing down your arms and out through your fingertips.

More relaxation techniques:

- Start at the top of your head, flexing, and then relaxing each part of your body.
- Close your eyes and visualize warm sunshine washing over you, melting away the tension, and relaxing all of your muscles.
- Think of a place where you feel very relaxed and calm. Close your eyes and visualize being in that place.

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