

# PREPARING FOR AN EXAM

## Preparation Strategies

Develop study sheets  
Develop concept maps  
Make flash cards  
Make problem cards  
Make self tests  
Do study guides  
Re-mark text materials  
Do problems  
Outline  
Take notes  
Summarize  
Chart related material  
Predict essay questions  
Write essay answers  
Answer questions at the end of chapter  
Participate in study groups

## Review Strategies

Recite study sheets  
Replicate concept maps  
Recite word cards  
Recite question cards  
Practice writing formulas  
Work problems  
Take self tests  
Practice study guide  
Make and recite lists  
Recite main points from outlines  
Recite notes  
Re-create charts  
Answer essay questions  
Recite main points out loud  
Recite answers from questions  
Explain material to study group

## FIVE STUDY-BREAK TENSION-REDUCERS

**C**ollege students—who must sit, read, and write for long periods of time—often experience a tensing of the muscles in the back of the neck or head. This sort of tension can spread to the small muscles and blood vessels of the scalp and temples, causing headaches and eyestrain.

A sound way to combat that sort of tension is to pause and perform some simple head and neck exercises. The five exercises below are recommended by Alex Kirsta, author of *The Book of Stress Survival*. Do them regularly—and slowly.

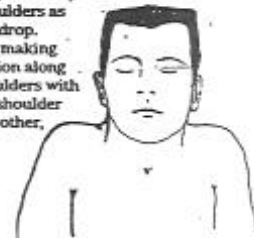


### 1. Head Rolls

Letting your head drop, heavily, as if it were a bowling ball, roll it slowly three times in one direction, then three times in the other.

### 2. Shoulder Shrug

Rest your hands on your lap and keep your arms limp. Lift your shoulders as high as you can and let them drop. Repeat the exercise 10 times, making sure you feel a pulling sensation along the top and back of your shoulders with each shrug. Now shrug each shoulder separately, first one, then the other, to a count of 10.



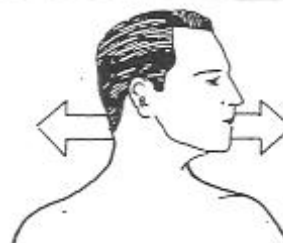
### 3. Neck Stretches

Drop your head slowly, first forward, then to each side, and finally backward. Drop it as far as you can, to give your neck muscles a healthy stretch. Let your eyes close and your jaws open at the end of each drop.



### 4. Shoulder Rolls

Sitting or standing up straight, with your arms limp, rotate your shoulders forward 10 times, then backwards 10 more times.



### 5. Head Turns

Keep your head level as you turn it slowly to the left and right 10 times. Repeat the exercise a second time, moving your head more quickly.



## Manage Your **STRESS**

# 12 TIPS FOR MANAGING STRESS

**Get Some Exercise** – Physical activity releases natural endorphins, which make you feel great and can alleviate stress.

**Eat Healthy Foods** – Avoid foods high in fat, sugar and sodium. Eat healthy snacks and don't skip meals.

**Take Breaks** – Schedule a few short breaks throughout the day to help minimize your stress. Stretch, go for a walk, call a friend. When you get back to what you were doing, you'll work more efficiently.

**Learn to Say NO** – Don't feel guilty when you have to tell others no. Taking on additional work when you are already too busy will only make things worse.

**Get Enough Sleep** – Most people need between 6-9 hours, but they'll give up sleep when they're under stress to get more studying or work done.

**Manage Your Time Effectively** – Keep a task list or a daily planner and make sure to include time for yourself. Give priority to the most important activities and do those first.

**Talk It Out** – Bottled up emotions will only increase your frustration and add to your stress. Share your feelings with someone, like a friend, a family member, professor or counselor. Talking with someone else can help clear your mind and give you a fresh perspective.

**Laugh** – As the saying goes, "laughter is the best medicine." Maintaining your sense of humor and the ability to laugh at yourself can really diffuse a stressful situation.

**Control What You Can** – A major source of stress comes from trying to control events or other people. When confronted with a stressful situation, ask yourself: Is this my problem? If the answer is no, then leave it alone. If the answer is yes, figure out if you need to resolve it now or later.

**Have a Good Cry** – Crying during periods of stress can be a healthy way to relieve your anxiety, and it might prevent a headache or other physical consequences of keeping things bottled up. But, if you are crying every day, this might be a sign of depression and you should seek help.

**Don't Self-Medicating** – Drugs and alcohol won't get rid of the conditions that cause stress. Although they may seem to provide temporary relief, they'll only mask or disguise problems.

**Get Help** – Asking for help is definitely not a sign of weakness. There are a lot of resources available to help students deal with stress, so take advantage of them.

## TEST PHOBIA: WAYS TO HELP YOU COPE

*How do you cope with the fear habit of taking tests? Do you set yourself up to fail? How do you stop it?*

We take tests in all facts of our lives and by learning how to develop a more relaxed attitude, we can improve our test taking habits.

Recognize that a “fear habit” is like any other habit. We’ve learned it. We’ve been conditioned to fear tests. Our psyches have been “tuned” to respond negatively to tests – any kind of test. Since grammar school, we’ve had to continuously “prove on paper” that we were learning something. Like any habit, it can be broken. In order to understand where this habit originated, we need to take a self-awareness, self-knowledge inventory. This is the most effective way of dealing with any habit.

Start by getting acquainted with yourself. Examine the various types of stress in your life that seem to influence your behavior and affect you the most around test time. Learn ways to improve the quality of your lifestyle. Accept your limitations and fragilities. You can only do so much, but give yourself credit for trying! Be assertive. Communicate you needs in positive ways.

Very important: get to know your instructor. You’d be surprised how helpful they can be. Ask how he/she coped with tests. Confide your test phobia. Ask about the scope of the test. Ask for specifics. What material you should study, etc. Remember, your instructor can only teach you the academics. How you apply them afterwards is not his/her problem. It is yours.

Here is a list of ways to help you prepare and pass your tests:

1. Attend every class. Be absent when there is absolutely no other alternative.
2. Use self-discipline in your study habits. Get rid of your distractions. Be prepared. Start studying at least a work before the test. If you wait until the night before the test, it’s too late.
3. Don’t depend on someone else’s notes. They don’t think the way you do.
4. Study the hardest parts first. Don’t cram. Study in short periods of 45-50 minutes. You’ll retain more.
5. Test yourself. Force yourself to formulate theories and recite them. Use mnemonic devices. Use silly sentence memory aides. Use anything that will help you. Force yourself to be interested. Reward yourself later in some “special” way.
6. Study and review but relax the night before the test. Go to bed early. Be well rested.
7. Follow your usual routine. Minimize your stress by not making any drastic changes in your life. Arguments and stressful circumstances can easily sabotage your test scores. Put everything on “hold” until after the test.

8. Don't use drugs, pills or alcohol.
9. Eat breakfast. Your brain needs the nourishment. Protein does it.
10. Review your notes the morning of the test. Do not memorize unrelated facts. Organize your notes. Be concise.
11. Get to class on time. No rushing.
12. Read/skim the entire test. Make a mental note of the time limit. Appropriate your time. Answer easy questions first.
13. Notice word clues.
14. Take enough time. Read carefully. Review your answers.
15. Outline essay questions before you start to write. Answer only what is asked for.
16. Use punctuation, clear sentences, legible writing. No "texting" language. Proofread.
17. Don't cheat.
18. Don't tell yourself that you are going to fail. Keep a positive attitude. Tell yourself (say it out loud) how hard you worked and how much you deserve the best possible test score.
19. Remember this is only a test. No test is a measure of your own personal worth.
20. Don't allow a test of any kind to intimidate you in any way. Learn to recognize the underlying reasons for your test phobia. Face the negatives in order to erase them.

# Test Taking Strategies

## **Multiple Choice Exams**

- Answer each question in your head first, before looking at the possible answers.
- Read all possible answers before selecting one.
- Test each possible answer by reading it alone with the question.
- Eliminate incorrect answers; cross them out or put an “x” next to them.
- First:
  - look at stem, lead part of statement, read it carefully!
- Then:
  - Look at the response choices, there may/will be:
    - An alternative meant to mislead the student who doesn’t know material or has shallow info.
    - An answer that seems to be a logical choice.
    - An answer that is far out in left field, not related to question.
    - The correct answer.
    - A response alternative such as none of the above, all of above, a and b above.
- If you don’t know the answer, here are some tips to consider:
  - Use the process of elimination.
  - Look for key words in the question and answer (e.g. “a” vs. “an”, plural words, qualifiers-see True/False Questions).
  - Look at other questions, they may give you hints or even answers.
  - Longest answer often right.
  - Involved explanations often right.
  - Right answer usually in middle.
  - Similar answers may cancel each other out.
  - Pick a broad answer.

## **True/False Questions**

- Read the entire question.
- Teachers tend to write more true questions.
- Look for qualifiers (all, sometimes, rarely).
  - All, one, always and never generally are false.
  - Usually, perhaps, often, seldom, rarely are generally true.
- True statements usually longer than false statements.
- Look for numbers that have been transposed or facts slightly altered.
- Watch for negatives (two negatives cancel each other out—read without negatives and then put them back in).
- If part of a true/false is wrong (false), the whole thing is wrong (false).

## **Matching Questions**

- Check the number of items in each column (can one item be used twice?).
- Look for differences between similar items.

- Match words that are similar grammatically (verbs with verbs, nouns with nouns).
- Look for the word that logically completes the phrase.
- Cross out items when you are finished with them, but remember sometimes an answer may be used more than once.
- May have strange directions, read carefully!

### **Short Answer/Fill-In**

- Concentrate on key words and facts.
- Be brief.
- Over learn material (know it backwards and forwards).

### **Essay Tests**

- Understand what the question is asking/verb used.
- Make an outline.
- Get to the point.
- Write legibly on one side of the paper/blue book.
- Organize your answer in the same way the question is organized.
- Manage your time wisely!
- Shorter answer is better than no answer.
- Watch grammar, spelling, legible writing, use technical terms related to the subject.

### **Math Tests**

- As soon as you get the test write down formulas and equations on the back of the test.
- Estimate an answer.
- Draw pictures or diagrams.
- Don't spend too much time on one problem, if you are stuck move on!
- Show all of your work (it is possible to earn partial credit for showing your process, even if you have the wrong answer).

### **Computer Graded Tests**

- Make sure your answer corresponds to the correct bubble on your Scantron.
- Check the test booklet against the answer sheet.
- Watch for stray marks.
- Erase wrong answers thoroughly.
- Typically your first guess is the right guess!

### **Open Book Tests**

- Carefully organize your notes.
- Write down formulas on a separate sheet of paper.
- Use bookmarks/post-its or paper clips to save time finding the location of a topic/answer.
- Predict questions and highlight relevant notes.
- Be aware of your time. Don't look up everything; only look up the difficult/hard to answer questions.