Test anxiety is common in all stages of study. While a little anxiety is helpful—it makes you study when you feel unmotivated—too much anxiety can cause students to feel overwhelmed and/or physically sick. These strategies can help you concentrate on the exam and eliminate debilitating feelings and thoughts.

### Preparing for the Exam

**Imagine the worst**

Make a mental or physical list of “the worst” that could happen if you fail the exam. Push your thoughts to the limit (i.e., I will fail this test, fail the class, drop out of school, lose financial aid, run out of money, starve). Then go back and let yourself be reasonably concerned. Remember: no test is the difference between successful and unsuccessful people.

**Take the anxiety out of the test situation**

Two nights before the exam, take a practice test, in a quiet room with a classroom-type desk and a time limit. Make it as real as possible. This should cause some anxiety but it can relieve the anxiety you feel on test day. Finish the test completely and then use the results for further study.

### Immediately Before the Exam

**Yell “stop”!**

When your mind is racing with negative thoughts, tell yourself out loud or in your head to “stop.” Then remove yourself from these negative thoughts.

**Think positively**

Tell yourself over and over that you can do it, that you have studied, that you are smart. Remember positive comments from teachers and friends. At the very least, think, “I am doing my best.”

**Daydream**

Choose one or two places you really like to be or remember your favorite parts in a relaxing movie. Go there, think of every detail—how does it feel to be there and what are the smells, sights, and sounds. This distance can help you come back and refocus.

**Stay out of the classroom**

Before the exam, put your belongings in the room. Set up to take the test and then leave the room. Walk around, visualize, and relax. Don’t try to study and ignore peers. Their anxiety can cause more anxiety and their last-minute review sessions may confuse what you already know. While waiting for the test to begin, practice relaxation techniques over and over.

### During the Exam

**Breathe**

Practice breathing methods. Practice taking deep breaths and holding them or taking deep breaths and letting the air out through pursed lips. At first your body will fight you, but continue until your heart slows down, even with your breathing.

**Take breaks**

Sit up straight, tense, and relax your back and neck muscles and then breathe deeply. Get back to the test.

Adapted from [http://www.cas.lsu.edu/](http://www.cas.lsu.edu/)