

# Test Anxiety



Test anxiety is a learned behavior. You are not born with test anxiety. Because it is a learned behavior, it can be unlearned.

## Four common sources of test anxiety:

### 1. Underpreparedness

**Description:**

- *Knowing you are not prepared*
- *Knowing you did not put enough time or effort into the learning process*
- *Cramming for an exam - may actually increase your test anxiety by drawing attention to the amount of information that has not been understood or learned.*

**Solution:**

- *Consistent, effective study strategies*
- *Stress level will be a motivator, not a hindrance*

### 2. Past experiences

**Description:**

- *Belief that what happened in past will occur again in the present*
- *Impacts your belief system, self-esteem, and confidence*
- *Inner voice begins its negative self-talk and reminds of past experiences*

**Solution:**

- *Can be difficult to diminish because of the complexity and dynamics of belief systems, established behaviors, and the power of emotions.*
- *For more severe test anxiety, the best strategy may be to work with a counselor to get to the root of the belief system and learn ways to alter your beliefs*
- *For milder cases, techniques include: affirmations, positive self-talk, seeing success, and goal setting*
- *Additional techniques: use of effective study strategies, working in study groups, using ample feedback, and successful completion of daily assignments – will build confidence & reduce test-anxiety level*

### 3. Fear of failure

**Description:**

- *Over-emphasis is placed on the importance of one test*
- *Rooted in: fear that someone else will be disappointed in you, equate grades to your level or self-worth or self-esteem, the test is given much greater value in your mind than it is worth in reality, or fear of losing a scholarship, financial aid, athletic eligibility, insurance eligibility, and other benefits*

**Solution:**

- *Remember that one test or one grade is only a measure of performance at that one moment in time and for that specific material. It is not a test of everything you learned or everything that you are.*
- *Keep the true perspective and be reminded of the actual value of one given test to your overall score. Most classes have a variety of opportunities during the term to earn a grade*
- *Consequences are real and sometimes there are severe consequences to pay for not performing well – however, one test is not what put students in difficult predicaments – test anxiety is a learned behavior, and so are study methods*

### 4. Poor test-taking skills

**Description:**

- *Feel well prepared and in control of the subject material, yet continues to experience test-anxiety*
- *Source of anxiety is lack of knowledge on how to take tests.*

**Solution:**

- *Learn how to take tests – see section on test taking skills*

**Resources:**

Ch. 12: Preparing for Tests. Houghton Mifflin Company.