

Test Anxiety: Common Causes

Academic Success Center
Iowa State University

Common Causes of Test Anxiety

Cause: You are unfamiliar with the test

Cure: *Learn about the test*

- How many questions are on the test?
- What is the format of the test (multiple-choice, short essay)
- How much time will you have to take the test?
- How are your answers scored?
- What topics will be covered?
- What is an example of a question to be asked?

Cause: You feel unprepared for the subject being tested

Cure: *Make an organized study schedule and stick to it*

- Block off time each day during the week before a test
- Be able to define terms and concepts in your own words
- Look for similarities and differences between ideas you are learning about

Cause: You have negative or perfectionist thoughts

Cure: Counter them with positive thoughts and actions

| Negative Thought | Positive Thought |
|--|---|
| I always do poor on test | I've got a better study plan for this test than I've ever had before. |
| This test is going to have trick questions | The test is designed to let me show what I know, and I know all of the formats of the questions. |
| Perfectionist Thought | Realistic Thought |
| There's an impossible amount of things to learn for this test. | I don't need to know the answer to every question; I just need to pass. |
| My knowledge of one of the topics is shaky | I don't need to know everything about every topic. If I start now, I learn more about the areas I should focus the most on. |

