



## Test Stress: Get Prepped

Studying is never fun-especially when there are about a zillion other things you'd rather be doing. But the plain truth is, you're a lot less likely to feel test stress if you go in confident that you've got the material down cold. In other words: be prepared for the test, and you probably won't stress out.

But that's easier said than done, right? You CAN get there by trying these solutions:

**Do your daily work.** As much as you can, stay on top of your daily classwork and homework *every day*. Don't put off assignments, and if you miss something because you were out of class, try to make it up right away. Think of your schoolwork as a long race: if you fall behind, you'll just have to work all the harder to catch up. The key is to *not fall behind*. By keeping up with regular lessons and assignments, you'll be absorbing all the stuff you'll need for a test.

**Learn from mistakes.** If you get a question wrong on a weekly quiz, or you get a poor mark on a homework assignment, don't just forget about it. Make it a point to understand **WHY** you got it wrong. Look up the right answer or ask your teacher for help. When the same sort of question shows up on your next test, you'll know how to tackle it.

**Make studying a regular routine.** Don't put off studying until the night before a test. Experts say that this sort of last minute "cramming" is a crummy way to learn. Instead, review your class material on a regular basis, and try these study helpers:

- **Make a study schedule.** Set aside time every week to study, and mark it on a planner or calendar so you can manage your study time. For more on this, check out IML's advice on **Time Management**.
- **Start a study group.** Before a test, or even every week or so, get together with classmates to talk and share notes on your lessons. Studying with friends can be surprisingly fun, and you can all benefit from one another's strong points.
- **Study your old tests.** When tests come back graded, don't chuck them out. Hold on to them so you can go over the questions when you have a comprehensive test (midterm or final) coming up.
- **Try making flashcards.** Make a list of facts, ideas, or skills that you've been having trouble with and put these onto flashcards. Use some of your study time to go over the flashcards until you know the material by heart.
- **Have a special study space.** Find a quiet, comfortable spot to do your homework and studying. Keep away from distractions like the television, computer, and talkative family members while you're studying.

<http://pbskids.org/itsmylife>

Copyright © 2005 CastleWorks, Inc. All rights reserved.

## Test Stress: Ten Terrific Test-Taking Tips

For many of us, the real stress begins when a test actually starts. Here are ten important ways to manage that stress and do your best on an exam:

1. **Show up on time.** Get the test off to the best possible start by getting there on time. Arriving late might make you feel rushed and nervous, and arriving too early could give you time to sit there and worry about things.
2. **Stay focused and relaxed.** Focused AND relaxed? Doesn't that sound impossible? Well, what we mean is this: keep your mind on the test, but don't tighten up. Try to stay loose and cool so you can move through the questions one by one. If you feel yourself clenching, or you feel so amped-up that you're afraid you might actually snap your pencil in your hand, try that deep-breathing thing for a moment. Then get right back to the test questions.
3. **Sit comfortably.** Don't hunch over the test or stiffen up. Sit in a relaxed way and keep your posture loose so you don't add aches and pains to your list of possible worries.
4. **Expect and accept a little bit of stress.** Don't worry if you still have some stress while you begin the test. Almost everyone feels this-it's there because you want to do your best and get a good grade. The key is to accept it and not let worrying about the stress make you even more stressed. Tell yourself, "I'm a little worried, but that's okay. I'm going to do well on this test because I'm prepared."
5. **Read the directions.** Take a minute to read the test instructions, if there are any, before you get started. This will keep you from making simple mistakes and guarantee that you won't have to waste time going back and redoing any work because you didn't understand the directions.
6. **Pace yourself.** Your test will probably be timed. Know ahead of time how many questions there are and how quickly you will have to move through each one. Don't focus on the clock as time ticks away, but glance up every once in awhile to make sure you're not falling behind pace.
7. **Don't rush.** Try to keep a good pace-but never rush through a question. Make sure you understand what is being asked, then make sure you think clearly about your answer. If the question is multiple-choice, read every single possible answer before you decide which one is the best. Choice A might seem good at first glance, but sometimes the best answer is another one. You can only know which choice is best if you read them all before you answer.
8. **Don't get distracted.** Keep your eyes on your paper, unless it's to occasionally glance at the clock. Don't look at the students around you. Because if they're nervous, it could make you nervous, and if they're confident-looking, it could make you wonder why it's so easy for them (like, what do they know that you don't?). And if the kid sitting next to you is picking his nose or doing something else that's funny, it could take your mind off the test. Another good reason to stay focused on your own test is that if you start looking around the room, a teacher might think you're trying to cheat.
9. **Focus on the stuff you know.** What happens if you come across a question that absolutely stumps you or seems impossible to answer? Well, since most tests are timed, you should probably skip a question like this and move on to the next one. After all, you don't want to spend ten minutes on a super-hard question, only to have time run out so you have to leave easier questions blank. In other words: if you get stuck, don't stay stuck. Pass on the questions and come back if you have time. You might come up with the answer to the hard question while you're answering an easier one!
10. **Use all your time.** If you happen to finish the test before time is up, don't sit there staring into space. Go back over the questions, especially the ones that seemed hard, and check your work. Fixing obvious mistakes can help boost your grade, and is way better than just waiting for the clock to run out.