

Preparing for the exam:

1. Over-prepare. To combat anxiety, you want and need to go into the exam as confident as you can.
2. Know as much about the exam format as possible and *study in the way you will be tested*.
3. Create a study plan and build in ways to confirm when you have **mastered** the concepts you will be tested over.
4. Identify negative self-talk (anxiety-producing thoughts) and develop positive counterstatements to replace, challenge, or stop them. **Practice, practice, practice!**
5. Plan to finish up studying the night before your exam. It's time to focus your attention on managing your anxiety – spend some time with people who encourage you and/or doing activities that help you feel calm, relaxed, and confident.
6. Exhausted brains don't think well, and when you're battling anxiety, you need your brain to be working. GET ENOUGH SLEEP!

What to do on the day of the exam:

1. Eat a sensible breakfast. Avoid caffeine if you are prone to jitters.
2. Relax the hour before the exam rather than studying - cramming at this point will not pay off and will likely increase anxiety.
3. Arrive 5-10 minutes early to choose a seat that works for you (i.e. away from the doors, near the front, by the heater, etc.). If seats are assigned, use the time to get comfortable in your space.
4. Avoid classmates who are negative or want to anxiously discuss the test. If necessary, wear headphones and listen to calming or inspiring music, read a book, or look at funny videos on your phone, read the [Guided Imagery for Exams](#) script, etc. Goal: remain in your happy place for as long as possible.

What to do during the exam:

1. Think of the test as a way to show what you know - not as a big trick to expose what you *don't* know. (If you have studied, you know more than you don't know.)
2. Quickly review the whole exam and organize your time accordingly. Take time to read the instructions carefully, twice if you need to. This is time well spent!
3. If you're worried about forgetting things, write out important information – dates, formulas, etc. – in the margin or on the back of your exam.
4. Begin by answering the questions you know first. This builds confidence. Always be looking for things you know.
5. There will always be questions that catch you off guard – plan for it. When it happens, don't panic. Just acknowledge it (everything is fine here, I knew this would come up...), mark it, and move on to the next question. Don't get stuck!
6. Remember, not knowing something *immediately* is not the same as not knowing it *at all*. Give yourself time to work it out. If it doesn't come to you, remember #4.
7. When you are unsure about an answer, mark the question and go back to it if you have time at the end of the exam.
8. Eliminate any negative self-talk and replace it with the positive statements you have practiced. Focus on this exam, one question at a time, not on your final grade or past performances.
9. If you find yourself getting so anxious that you are unable to think clearly, put your pencil down and take a break. Trying to solve complicated problems when your brain isn't cooperating is counterproductive. Use relaxation techniques and positive self-talk to relax your mind and body and resume the test when you are able to think clearly.
10. Circle key words in difficult questions, this will help keep you focused on the central point.
11. Express difficult questions in your own words. If you can, read difficult questions aloud to yourself – even reading silently (move your lips!) can help.

12. Predict answers to multiple choice questions before looking at your choices, then match your response to the closest answer.
13. If you are unsure about what is being asked on a question, ask for clarification.
14. Return to skipped questions at the end and recall any related information that you can.
15. Do not leave any questions blank; you may be able to earn at least partial credit if you have attempted to answer the question.
16. Avoid focusing on what other students are doing during the exam. Don't panic if you're still working as others start to finish – it's not a race, and speed is not a reliable indicator of knowledge. Mentally plan to spend all of the time the instructor has given you.
17. Review the entire test: look for any misread directions and careless errors but...
18. Try not to second-guess yourself. Stick with your first answer unless you have a concrete reason to change it. *(Research indicates that students experiencing anxiety are more likely to change from right answers to wrong answers).*
19. Turn in the exam with confidence.

What to do after the exam:

1. Reward yourself whether you think you did well on the exam or not. Reward your effort.
2. Focus on what you did right rather than any mistakes you may have made.
3. Don't discuss the exam questions with other students; it will likely only increase your anxiety.
4. Evaluate your success in managing your anxiety and develop a plan to reduce it further on your next exam.
5. Do not immediately start studying for another exam, take some time to relax – you've earned it!

Thinking about your next exam?

1. Review your returned exam and pay attention to what you missed; evaluate your study strategies and make changes if necessary.
2. Consider meeting with your professor during office hours for feedback and suggestions on how to prepare for next time.
3. Use tutoring to strengthen your understanding of course material. [Academic Success Tutoring](#) offers supplemental instruction, drop-in, attached, and 1:1 tutoring – and it's free! Visit creighton.edu/academicsuccess for all the information you need.
4. Meet with an [Academic Coach](#) to learn more about managing test anxiety. Schedule an appointment through [CreightonConnect \(instructions\)](#) or drop-by and see an Assistant Academic Coach or Academic Success Peer Mentor during [Drop-In hours](#) – no appointment needed!
5. If you feel like your anxiety reaches beyond academic/test anxiety, consider meeting with a counselor at [Student Counseling Services](#).
6. If you received testing accommodations in the past or think you might be eligible for accommodations now, reach out to [Student Accessibility Services](#) for more information.

Use the worksheet on the next page to create a plan for your next exam!

Managing Test Anxiety Worksheet

Negative Self-Talk (Anxiety-Producing Thoughts)	Positive/realistic counter-statements (What I'll say to myself instead)

Steps I can take to increase my confidence:

People and/or activities that help me feel calm and relaxed.

Realistic rewards for successful study sessions or after exams.

At least THREE concrete strategies I will use to manage my anxiety in preparation for and during my next exam.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Reflect on your exam – not on your score, but on how you managed your anxiety. Remember: learning to manage test anxiety is a process. The strategies you're learning will become more effective with practice, so *keep practicing!*

What worked?

What didn't work?

What strategies will I continue to practice?

What strategies – if any – will I try next time?