

# Lesson 3: Dealing with Test Anxiety

## What Is Test Anxiety?

Tests are given for a purpose and are an unavoidable part of life. You take tests at school. You will take a test to get your driver's license. You will take tests for admission to college. And you will answer written and oral questions when you interview for a job.

When you think about taking a test, do you become nervous or even ill? If so, you are experiencing *test anxiety*, a feeling of nervousness that occurs before or during a test. It is normally caused by a lack of confidence or a fear of failure. Some test anxiety is normal; however, excessive anxiety can negatively affect your memory and thinking skills.

It takes self-confidence and a positive attitude to prepare for a test. Learn to build and trust your test-preparation abilities. Tell yourself that you will learn and do well on tests, even though you may experience some anxiety and nervousness. Tests do not measure your self-worth; tests measure only what you know about a particular portion of material at a particular time in your life.

What do you do when you recognize that test anxiety is affecting you physically? How do you deal with a lack of confidence?

First, realize that *some* nervousness is good; in fact, it is healthy. A flow of adrenaline can sharpen your mental alertness and improve your test-preparation and test-performance skills. Test nervousness is not the same as the lack of confidence that results when you fail to study for a test. If you walk into a classroom knowing that you have done your best to prepare for a test, you will most likely feel confident in your abilities.

Read the following seven ways to reduce test anxiety. Use these ideas the next time you begin to experience anxiety while preparing for a test. Do whatever helps you to gain victory over test anxiety.

## Seven Ways to Reduce Test Anxiety

1. Ask God to take away your fear.
2. Quote and meditate on your favorite Bible verse.
3. Talk to yourself.
4. Think positive things.
5. Get a drink of water.
6. Relax for a few minutes.
7. Stay confident in your abilities.

In the long term, you can build your test confidence by practicing good study habits: listen in class, take notes, review daily, read your lesson before class, manage your time wisely, become testwise, display a positive attitude, follow a schedule, and pray regularly and faithfully. Challenge yourself to do your best on every test. You can—if you think you can!

## Avoid the Need to Cram

*Cramming* is stuffing information into your mind in a short period of time with the intent of remembering it just long enough to pass a test. Students who cram wait until a few hours before the test (usually the night before or the morning of the test) to study. Granted, a few students who cram do well on tests. Most, however, soon forget the majority of what they have studied. Why? Because they didn't focus on the information studied long enough to store it in their long-term memory. Learning is more than passing tests; it is recalling important information long after the test is taken.

The best way to avoid cramming is to keep up with your class assignments. Develop a study and review schedule, and stick with it. Review

and study regularly the information you want to learn. Start studying and reviewing at least one week in advance for major tests that cover two to three weeks of information. For tests that cover a week’s amount of material, begin studying three days before the test. Begin studying two to three weeks in advance for six-week and nine-week tests. Do not procrastinate (put off) reviewing. If you do, expect to pay a big price for your poor study habits.

Occasions may occur when your teacher gives an assignment and expects you to know the material the next day. What do you do? You have no choice but to cram. The “cramming” hints in the box will help you prepare for short-notice assignments. Don’t use these hints as your regular approach to preparing for tests. Use them only when you are forced to do so.

**“Real knowledge, like everything else of value, is not to be obtained easily. It must be worked for, studied for, thought for, and, more than all, must be prayed for.”**

—Thomas Arnold

### **Cramming for Short-Notice Assignments**

- Identify the most important material, and study it well.
- Skim and scan the textbook and class notes.
- Take additional notes on the most difficult information.
- Do not expect total recall or understanding of everything.
- Review and recite important information.
- Use mnemonic memory aids.
- Go to bed at a reasonable time, and get up early to study.
- After the test, restudy and review the material that you crammed.



**Directions:** List six symptoms of test anxiety. After you write your list, reread it and put a star by the ones that you have experienced lately.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** List two study habits that limit your need to cram.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** On your own paper, write a paragraph summarizing how to maintain a positive attitude while preparing for a test.