

Armenta Learning Academy

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Test Preparation & Reducing Test Anxiety

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This is the time of the year when many students face a multitude of tests; both standardized and classroom-based. Preparing for these tests is not always as easy as studying your notes and working on review questions, though these practices are extremely important. Students often face anxiety about tests, and this anxiety can deeply impact their test preparation and performance. Below are some ways of dealing with this anxiety, and how to prepare for tests.

- ✎ Avoid negative thoughts. Thinking about all the things that could go wrong with the test will only increase your anxiety. Relax and try to have fun!
- ✎ Get a good night's sleep and eat a power packed breakfast. Start studying at least a week before the test. Even 15-20 minutes a day will help to keep the information fresh in your mind. Take those spare moments of brushing your teeth, curling your hair, and eating lunch, and turn them into active study time. Every little bit counts!
- ✎ Be on time. Being late will increase your anxiety, arriving early allows you time to relax before the test. Take a few minutes before the test to review, recite, and rehearse.
- ✎ Bring all the materials you'll need. Find out ahead of time what you will need. Pencil or pen? Are calculators or study guides allowed? Do you need scratch paper?
- ✎ Avoid discussing the test with classmates the day of the test. This often just increases your anxiety. It is much more productive to sit quietly and review your notes.
- ✎ Act confident. It is hard for the mind to think one way and act another way. Sit and stand with a calm, controlled posture. Slow down. Avoid expressing your nervousness. Be Confident!
- ✎ Take the time to focus before the test. Arrive early and review your notes, or if this causes panic, focus on something else, such as an item in the classroom, a pleasurable scene or activity, etc.
- ✎ Listen carefully to the teacher or test-giver's verbal instructions before the test is given out. This information is very important and can help increase your success on the test.
- ✎ Read all instructions slowly and carefully at least twice.
- ✎ Ask for clarification on directions and questions if you need it.
- ✎ If you are afraid you will forget something, write it down on the margin or back of the test as soon as you receive it.
- ✎ Skim the test when you receive it to budget your time. Often teachers will indicate how many points each section is worth. Use this as a guideline to decide how much time to focus on each question. It doesn't make sense to spend 10 minutes on a 5 point question, and then not have enough time to write an essay worth 40 points.
- ✎ Don't panic if you can't remember the answer. Answer the easy questions first, then go back and look at the harder ones. This will give you more confidence, and can also trigger your memory. If a problem is unclear and you are unsure, skip it and come back to it later. Sometimes other questions will answer other particular questions. If you still



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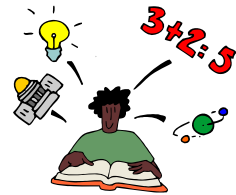
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don't know the answer after skipping it and coming back later, look for hints in other questions, then try to remember something related to the question. Looking at the general topic may help you remember more specific facts that could answer the question. If all else fails, write down the closest thing you can think of. This will at least get you started in the right direction. Even if you do not completely answer the question, some teachers will give you partial credit for trying.

- ✎ Learn some relaxation techniques you can use during the test to calm yourself. Breathing exercises, muscle relaxation, and visualization are skills that can relax you and help you perform better.

Being a good student takes discipline and positive study habits:

- ✎ Learn to say no to partying and movies. Put your study time as a priority. It makes a world of difference.
- ✎ Start early and do not procrastinate. Get into the habit of studying 20 minutes a day minimum, regardless if a test is coming up or not.
- ✎ Time is precious; create a personalized study cassette tape. Take it with you in the car, practice while you get ready in the morning, or while you walk your dog. Every minute counts, and the minutes add up rather quickly.
- ✎ Create a schedule and stick to it. Repetition is a good rule of thumb. Remember: 1 class equates to 1.5 hours of study time each week. So, on the average, 5 classes equate to 7.5 hours of study time a week minimum.
- ✎ Utilize academic support from study groups, tutors, workshops, etc. These activities are highly beneficial to academic success, and assist in your academic goals.
- ✎ Statistics show soothing music as background noise, contrary to popular belief, can enhance your concentration, and make the learning process more enjoyable.
- ✎ Floral scented candles and floral potpourri facilitate learning. Some of my personal favorites for memory are apple, ylang top, neroli, and rosemary. Aromatherapy, strange yet true, does work!
- ✎ A quiet and comfortable study area is usually an important ingredient. Try a library, study lounge, coffee house, back porch, or your school's College and Career Planning Center. Remember to bring plenty of study materials and healthy brain food.
- ✎ Try getting into a comfy pair of pajamas after a hot bath, drinking a cup of hot tea, listening to your favorite mellow c.d., and curling up with your notebook and a highlighter. Being relaxed while studying can help you maintain that mindset when it comes to a taking a test. Get comfortable and plan to sit a while. Take bullet point notes and highlight key words and phrases. You'll thank yourself later.
- ✎ Remember: Don't be afraid to ask questions. If you are unclear about anything while studying on your own or working in class, pick up the phone and call a friend or raise your hand and ask a question. It's not that you don't know it; it's just that you haven't learned it yet. Don't hesitate!



Most students can achieve higher test scores with the proper preparation and attitude. By utilizing these tips and thoroughly reviewing all course material, test scores can dramatically increase. You can do it!!!

