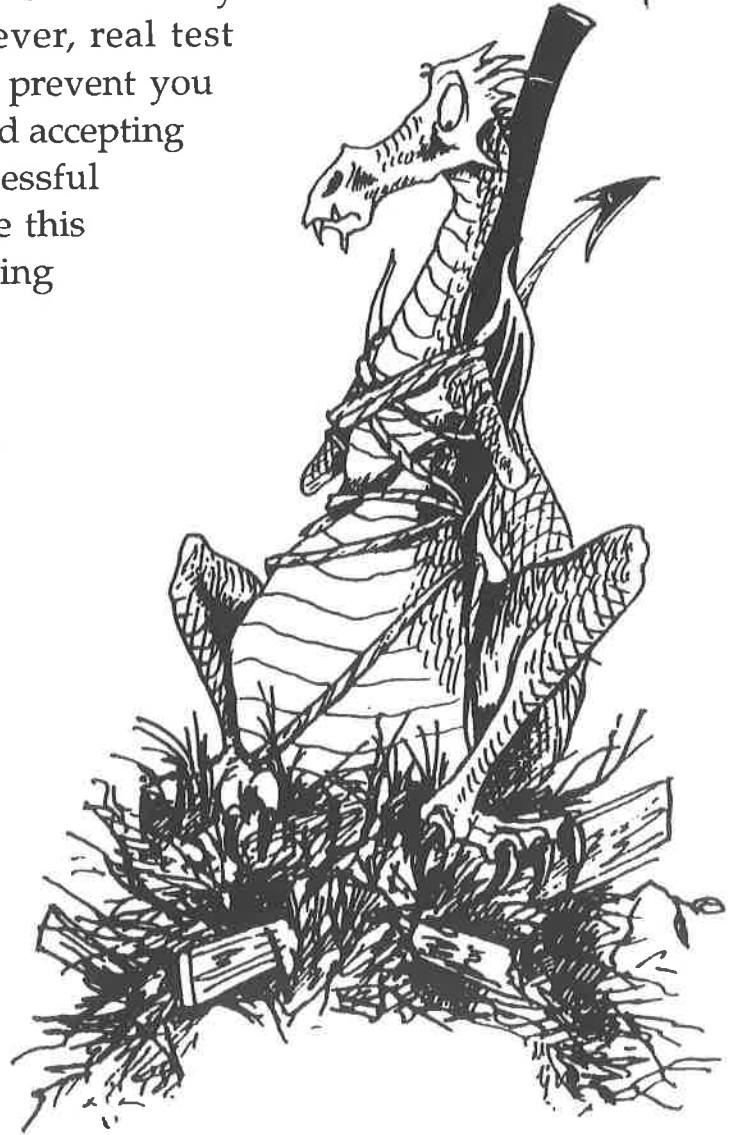


TEST ANXIETY . . . AND HOW TO FREE YOURSELF

Grades, grades, grades! A test grade reflects how well you did on *that* particular test — it doesn't necessarily reflect your intelligence, how much you learned, your creativity, or your worth as a person. It's important to keep this in mind and to view test grades in proper perspective with the rest of your life.

If you have "butterflies" in your stomach before a test, don't be disturbed. Most people get them. A little extra "charge" or adrenaline can help you perform at your best. Turning that extra bit of energy into a positive attribute actually can increase your test score. However, real test anxiety can block your memory and prevent you from doing well. By understanding and accepting test anxiety and then applying successful tools to conquer it, you can overcome this barrier and practice effective test-taking strategies.

Carefully consider the test anxiety information on page 180 and try some of the suggestions the next time you find yourself becoming anxious.



STRATEGIES TO STOP TEST ANXIETY

1. Stop Yourself

When you first have any negative thought, immediately begin positive "self-talk." This is the way in which you communicate with yourself "inside your head." Interrupt the continuous thoughts of worry by giving yourself permission to be concerned as you channel your energy into doing something to help yourself. Once you have admitted that you are anxious, accept it and continue trying to improve the situation. This focuses your attention on a positive action rather than on negative worry.

2. Plan Your Attack

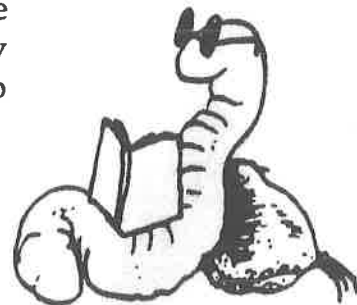
Use some of these strategies as alternatives to nonproductive anxiety and worry. Be sure to try each strategy. You have everything to gain. Once you find several strategies that work for you, you can rely on them with great trust. Just knowing that you are in control of the situation and can handle your feelings will allow you to perform much better during the test.

Visualize yourself studying in an organized manner and taking the test with success and ease. See the grade you want clearly written at the top of the paper. Include a lot of details and make the visualization very realistic. *See* your success in your mind. Visualizing is a very powerful instrument!

Daydream about something you especially enjoy — a hobby, sport, vacation, certain location or time, someone special, etc. Make it a vivid dream with warm, comfortable surroundings.

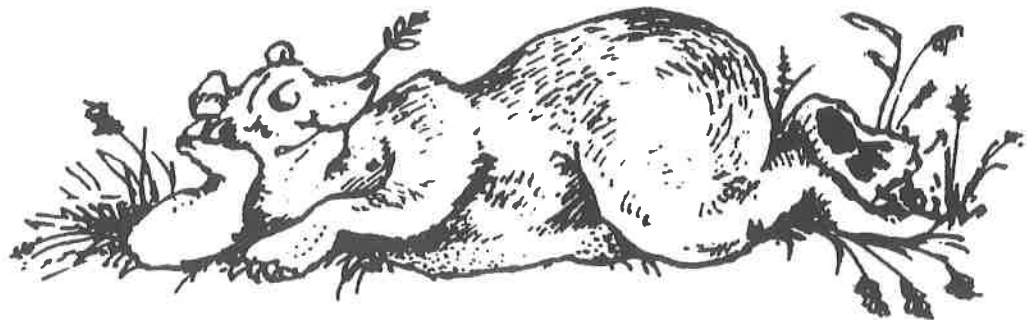
Make Up a story about anything preposterous. Blow it "up and out of reality" — exaggerate! Imagine the worst thing that could happen to you if you did poorly on the test. Make it funny and very unrealistic. Soon you will be laughing at yourself.

Recall the helpful tools and methods you have learned and have come to trust. They will aid your memory. There are so many — and you can count on them whenever you want or need them.



STRATEGIES TO STOP TEST ANXIETY *continued*

- Breathe** by taking several slow, controlled, deep breaths. Concentrate on the movement of the air as it goes in and out of your body. Focus *all* of your attention on breathing!
- Notice** your body posture and any tense muscles. Make a conscious effort to relax those muscles. First, tense each muscle as much as possible for a few seconds and then relax it. Tell yourself that you are now relaxed. You may want to "relax" only those muscles that you can feel. Or, begin at the top of your body and work down to your toes. Focus your entire attention toward this effort.
- Do Something** physical, such as exercise (if the situation permits it).

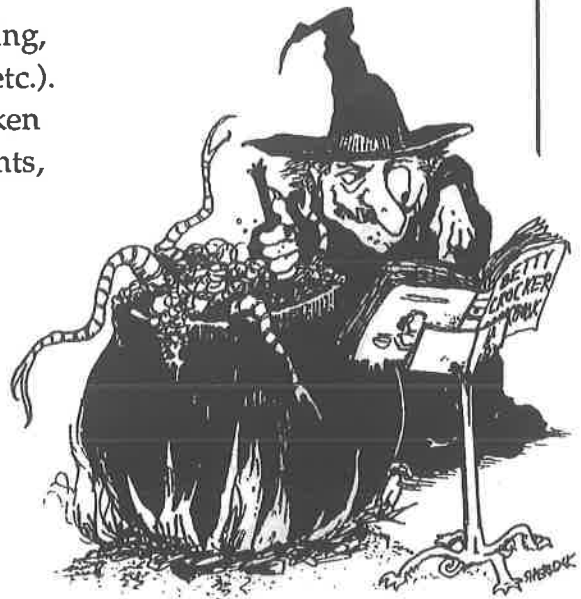


HAVE SELF-CONFIDENCE!

PREPARATION BEFORE THE TEST

IN SCHOOL

- **Study the teacher for clues as to what's important:**
 - Voice (volume, inflection, speed changes)
 - Gestures (face, hand, body)
 - Materials (handouts, models, films, overhead transparencies)
 - Repetition of main ideas/details
 - Know the types of questions the teacher will ask (requests for details, general overview of the subject matter, objective or subjective tests, time sequencing, graphic information such as charts, graphs, maps, etc.).
- **In class...**
 - Intend to learn.
 - Listen carefully.
 - Take good notes and review them often.
 - Ask good questions, including what material is to be covered on the test and what form the test will take.
 - Try to condense and capture important ideas into a mind map or outline at the end of each class.
- **Get information from other students.**
 - Talk with others who have previously taken the class.
 - Get old tests.
 - Don't expect the exact same questions on the next test.
 - Look at the general concepts covered.
 - Look at the format (true/false, matching, multiple-choice, short answer, essay, etc.).
 - Watch for the amount of questions taken from class lectures, reading assignments, handouts, audiovisual aids and other assignments.
 - Look for trick questions.
 - Watch for the information that wasn't covered.
 - Did the test require recall of facts or reasoning skills?



PREPARATION BEFORE THE TEST *continued*

AT HOME

- Refer to the note-taking strategies related to creating study sheets and the reading strategies in other chapters of this book.
- A few days before the test, list concepts you think are most important and ask the teacher, at a convenient time, if these are appropriate topics to study for the test.
 - Choose a time when the teacher has set aside a few moments to spend with individual students (after class, before school or after school are good).
 - This demonstrates to the teacher that you have taken the interest and initiative in studying for the test.
 - What have you got to lose? Most teachers will be very helpful and will be delighted that you have an interest in the class.
- Gather all of the study materials you will need.
- Review any class/reading notes, handouts, study sheets, 3" x 5" cards, texts, course outlines, out-of-class assignments, old tests, mind maps, etc.
 - Pay particular attention to:
 - Lists
 - Italicized or boldface words or phrases
 - Material "weighted" in class (concepts stressed by the teacher through repetition or amount of time given to a concept)
- Divide material into what you know well, what you need to review, what is unfamiliar, etc.
 - Color-code or label this material. For example:
 - A or green = know well
 - B or yellow = review
 - C or red = unfamiliar



PREPARATION BEFORE THE TEST *continued*

- Construct additional 3" x 5" cards which include:
 - Vocabulary
 - Definitions
 - Formulas
 - Lists of causes/effects, pros/cons
 - Summaries of concepts (cue words and phrases)(Note: These are especially good for open-book tests!)
- Turn chapter headings and subheadings within chapters into possible test questions.
 - Make up questions about material in the text and your notes. Then answer the questions under time pressure.
- Review specific note-taking techniques and rehearse your "plan of attack" (*especially important for essay tests*).
- Form a "study group."
- Quickly review the material just before going to sleep. Your subconscious will continue to "rehearse" the information.
- Get a full night's sleep before the test.
- Have the positive attitude that you've studied and will do well on the test.

BE ORGANIZED!



JUST BEFORE THE TEST

- **Arrive early enough to:**
 - Gather all needed materials.
 - Choose a quiet part of the room (a corner in the front of the room is best).
 - to avoid the distractions of those in front of you
 - to hear clearly any oral directions
 - to read the chalkboard better
 - “Settle in” and get comfortable.
 - Visit the restroom.
 - Clean your glasses (if you have any).
 - Get a drink of water.
 - Remove all distracting items from your desk.
 - Sit erect in the chair to stay alert.
 - Relax (breathe deeply, stretch, etc.).
 - Quickly glance through your study sheets for a last review, if you feel like it.
- **Don’t talk to others about test material — it is too confusing!**
- **If you are totally unfamiliar with the test room and feel uncomfortable about taking the test there, it is a good idea to make a brief visit to the test room before the test date.**
- **Bring all of your previous experiences and learning with you. Trust your study skills and test-taking strategies!**

**FOCUS ON CONCENTRATING
AND HAVE A POSITIVE
ATTITUDE!**

SOME TIPS FOR PARENTS: HOW TO HELP AT HOME

How To Help At Home

- Put a priority on reading and demonstrate it!
- Show your enthusiasm for education by taking an active interest in your child's schooling.
- Attend school functions.
- Have a conference with your child's teacher.
- Make a point to talk *with* (not at) your child about daily activities.
- Provide an adequate breakfast and lunch for your child.
- Talk about teachers in a positive tone in front of your child.
- Encourage your child to participate in the "extras" the school offers.
- Know what classes and assignments your child has.
- Become familiar with late homework/make-up policies.
- Find out when/if teachers are available for extra help.
- Monitor the number of hours your child watches/uses television, video games, etc.



- Help your child establish good time management techniques and check on this from time to time.
- Encourage your child to learn how to learn.
- Discuss your child's intent to learn with him or her.
- Know how your child learns best and take advantage of this information.
- Try to discuss the day's activities around the dinner table.