

Test Strategies & Test Anxiety

Marshal Your Resources

- **If you're studying hard, you're doing something wrong**
 - Using your time-management system, you can break down the information into small segments so you can LEARN as you go along
 - If you are LEARNING the information then you will only need to review it as the test approaches
 - Students who spend hours and hours studying for tests are trying to learn everything from scratch when they should have been learning it all along

Define the challenge



What information does the professor want you to know?

- What lectures and reading assignments are fair game?
- What types of questions are on the test, and how many of each?
- Open book/note test?
- Will formulas be provided or do they need to be memorized?
- How much time will be available?

Build a study guide

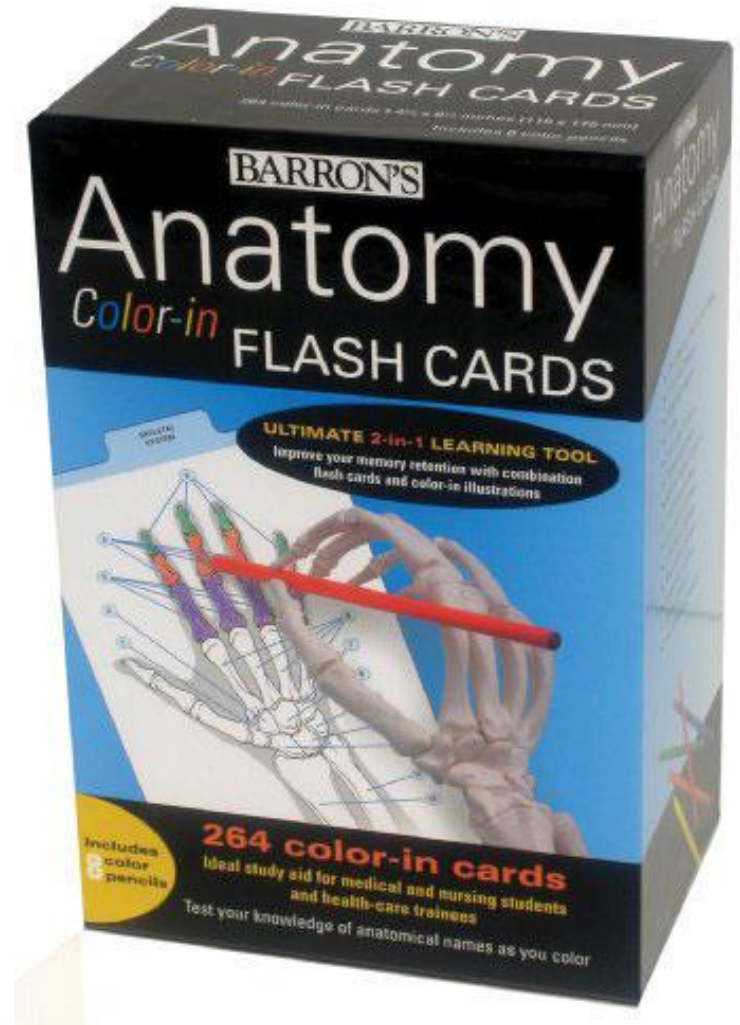
- For Nontechnical classes
- Find all your notes on the information that will be tested
 - If your notes are typed, simply create a new document and pull notes from each piece of information to be tested and clearly label each topic
 - If your notes are handwritten, pull notes out of your notebook and label and staple all the notes on the topic together (or type the notes and label as noted above)

Construct a Mega-Problem Set

1. Match the lecture to the problem set that covers the same material
2. Copy sample problems from these lecture notes onto a blank sheet of paper (not the steps or answers)
3. Label the blank sheet of paper with the date of the lecture
4. Fasten this sheet with a paper clip to the problem set you matched it to in step one

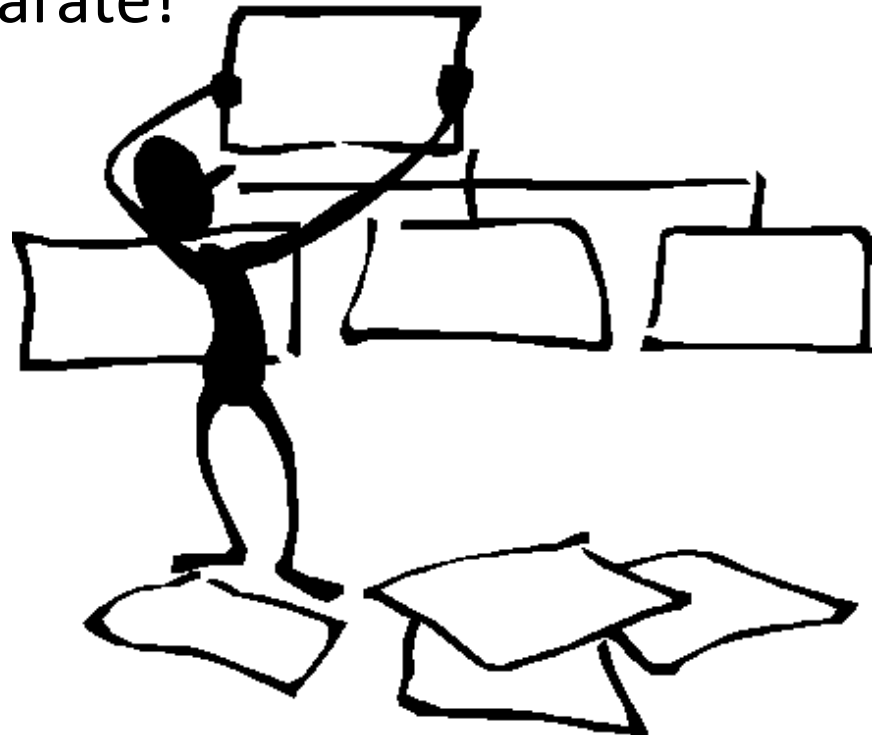
Prepare Memorization Aids

- Some material requires memorization
 - Formulas, chemical equations, artwork, dates
- Use flash cards
 - Create them at least one-week before the test



Schedule Your Organization Wisely

- Don't organize your study materials for a test AND study on the same day
 - Keep these tasks separate!



Conquer the Material

- After you've organized all the materials, read all the assignments...
 - Now it's time to actually STUDY!



Trust the Quiz-and Recall Method

- The most effective way to imprint a concept in your mind is to...
 - **First, Review it**
 - **Second, Try to explain it**
 - If you close your eyes are able to construct the argument from scratch (auditory learners) or are able to write it down (visual, read/write, kinesthetic) you KNOW that you have fully imprinted the material in your mind
 - Recall Blooms Taxonomy from Week 1 & 2?

Using the Quiz-and-Recall Method for Nontechnical Courses

- Create practice quizzes based on your self-made study guide
 - Try to cover all the material in your notes
- Once you've built the quizzes, go through them one by one to be sure you can articulate the “conclusions” and some of the “evidence”
- Going over these answers in your head, out-loud or writing the information down (does not need to be formal) will help you reinforce the information
 - Place checkmarks next to questions you struggle with, review the notes and textbook and come back to them again until all the check marks are gone
 - **Do NOT keep going over information that you understand**

Using the Quiz-and-Recall Method for Technical Courses

- If you created your study guide, you have all the problem sets ready
 - Try to answer each, showing your work (as you would on the test)
 - As before, if you have a hard time with one of the problems, put a check mark by it
 - Return to the quiz until all check marks are gone
 - This may involve Tutor help!



Memorize over Time

- If you already made the flashcards, simply review cards in short bursts
 - Do NOT review flash cards for an hour...20 minutes tops!
 - Review the information 2 – 3 times a day
 - Remove cards you are consistently getting right until you have no more cards left!
 - If time allows, run through the ALL cards one more time the day before the exam to refresh your memory

Invest in Academic Disaster Insurance



- Most students “freeze up” from time to time on a test, especially if you see a question that you don’t immediately know the answer to...
 - However, if you manage to keep up your note-taking and asking any questions of the professor or tutor that you need clarified, you should be able to avoid this scary predicament

Eliminate Your Question Marks

- Ask questions during class
 - Don't leave blank spaces/question marks in notes until the week before the exam
- Develop the habit of talking with your professor after class
 - Go over those blank spots/questions marks right away
 - It's NOT brown-nosing
- Ask Classmates
 - Clear up those "check marks" before the exam by talking to A+ classmates
- Come prepared to exam review sessions (if offered)
 - Do all your study guide preparations and practice quizzes before the review session so "check marks" can be cleared up during the session

Provide A+ Answers

- Common pitfalls of exam taking are:
 - Running out of time
 - Providing answers that don't fully answer all the parts of the question being asked



Strategy #1 Review First, Answer Questions Later



- Read through the entire exam first
 - It lets you know what is being covered
 - Allows your mind to prepare for the next questions
 - Helps you relax and decreases your stress

Strategy #2: Build a Time Budget

- Based on the number of questions and the amount of time to take the test, create a mental “time budget”
 - Give yourself 10 minutes buffer time
 - You can look up at the clock from time to time to make sure you are on track but don’t focus on it!

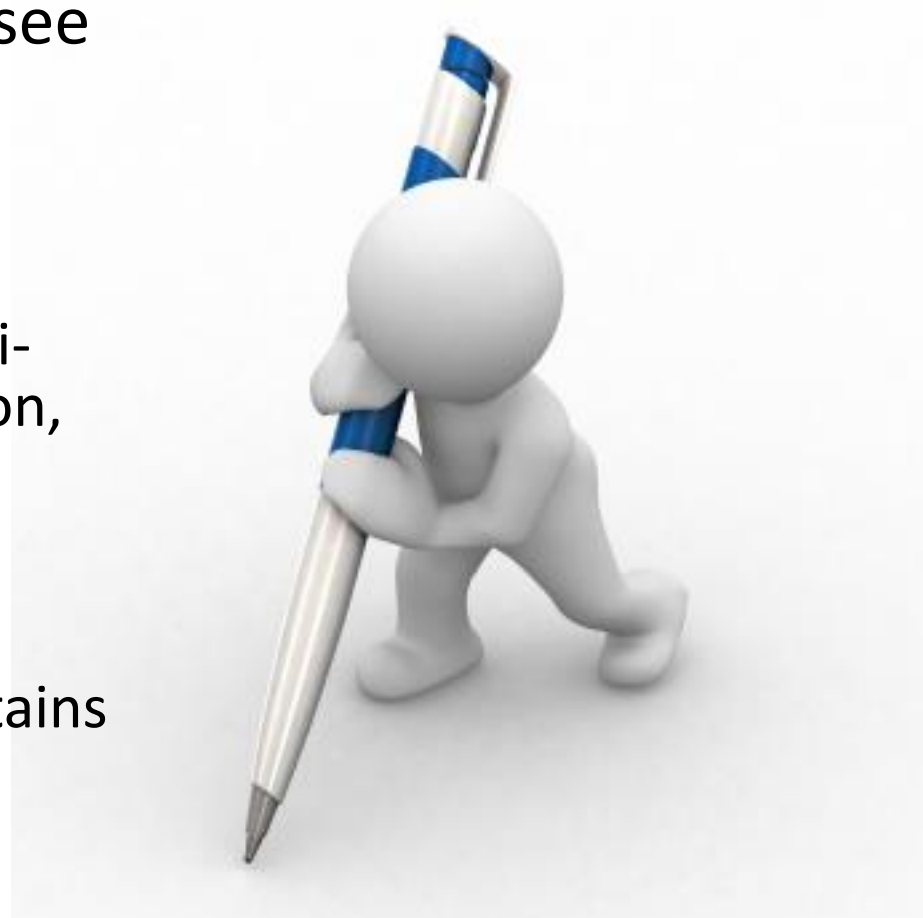


Strategy #3: Proceed from Easy to Hard

- Skip questions you cannot immediately answer and come back to them later
- Answer questions in order from easy to hard (this may not be the order in which they are presented)
- The “easy” questions may jog your memory for the “hard” questions

Strategy #4: Outline Essays

- Don't just start writing and see what happens
- Break down the question
 - There are usually 3 or 4 mini-questions within the question, underline each
- Write down a quick outline
 - Make sure your outline contains the answer for each mini-question



Strategy #5: Check Your Work

- Write the essay
 - If time permits, check over the essay to make sure each part of the question is answered
 - Check for spelling errors, missed words, or other grammatical errors
- It may feel good to hand in your exam before other students, but the time you take to review your answers will be well worth it!

A close-up photograph of a man with a distressed expression, his hands pressed against his forehead. He has a furrowed brow and a slightly open mouth, conveying a sense of intense pressure or worry. The background is solid black, which makes the man's face and hands stand out. Overlaid at the bottom of the image is the text "TEST ANXIETY" in a bold, pink, sans-serif font with a white outline.

TEST ANXIETY

On average, students who suffer from test anxiety perform 12% below their peers.

**WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS
OF TEST ANXIETY?**

PHYSIOLOGICAL OVER-AROUSAL

- perspiration
- sweaty palms
- headache
- upset stomach
- rapid heart beat
- tense muscles
- dry mouth



...commonly referred to as “emotionality”

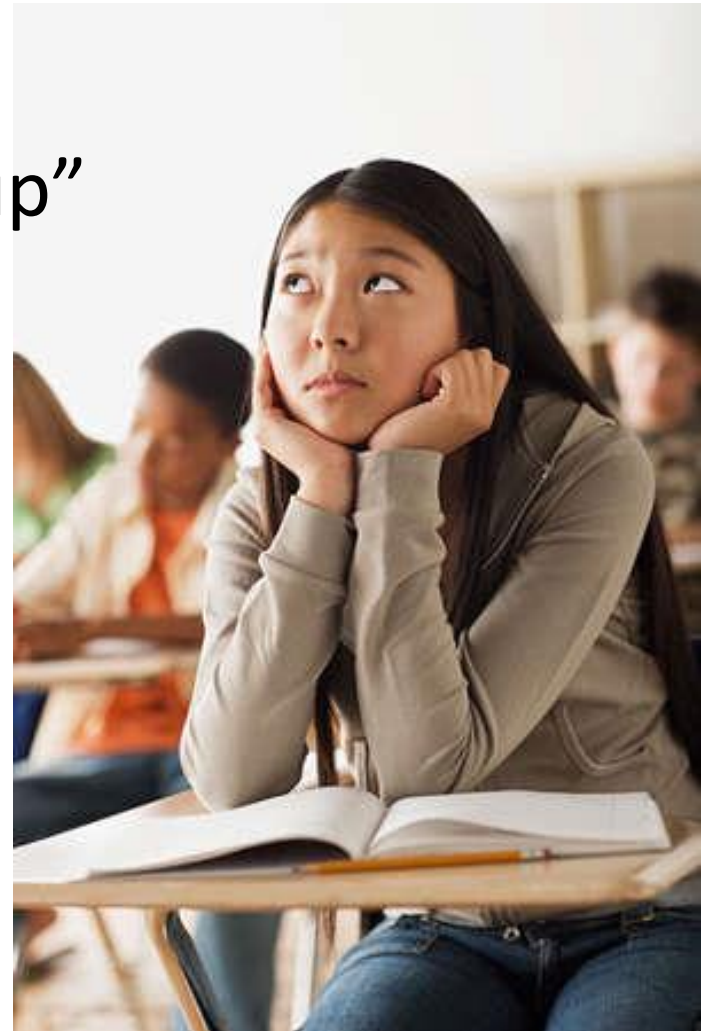
WORRY & DREAD

- expectations of gloom and doom
- fear of failure
- random thoughts
- feelings of inadequacy
- self-condemnation
- negative self-talk
- comparing yourself unfavorably to others



IMPAIRMENT

- poor concentration
- “going blank” or “freezing up”
- confusion
- poor organization



WHAT CAUSES TEST ANXIETY?

The #1 cause of test anxiety is
poor preparation!

CLUES YOU ARE NOT PREPARED



- you “crammed” the night before the test
- you did not review your notes after class
- you did not get enough quality sleep
- you did not do the assignments

CLUES YOU ARE NOT PREPARED

- you missed class and didn't get the lecture notes from a classmate
- you do not have a good time-management system (i.e., calendar or planner)
- you procrastinated



...other causes of test anxiety include prior adverse experiences, perfectionism, and a social atmosphere that places excessive importance on test results.

**OKAY, I'M PREPARED. WHAT DO I
DO IF I STILL HAVE ANXIETY?**

CHANGING YOUR ATTITUDE

- remember that the most reasonable expectation is to try to show as much of what you know as you can
- remind yourself that a test is only a test – there will be others
- avoid thinking of yourself in irrational, all-or-nothing terms
- reward yourself after the test – take in a movie, go out to eat, or visit with friends

DON'T FORGET THE BASICS

- continue habits of good nutrition and exercise
- continue your recreational pursuits and social activities – all contribute to emotional and physical well-being
- follow a moderate pace when studying; vary your work when possible and take breaks when needed – 45 min on, 15 min off
- get plenty of sleep the night before the test – when you are overly tired, you will not function at your best
- once you feel adequately prepared for the test, do something relaxing

THE DAY OF THE TEST

- begin your day with a moderate breakfast and avoid coffee, especially if you are prone to “caffeine jitters”
- try to do something relaxing the hour before the test – last minute cramming will cloud your mastering of the overall concepts in the course

THE DAY OF THE TEST

- plan to arrive at the test location early – this will allow you to relax and to select a seat located away from doors, windows and other distractions
- avoid classmates who generate anxiety and tend to upset your stability
- if waiting for the test causes anxiety, distract yourself by reading a magazine or newspaper

DURING THE TEST: BASIC STRATEGIES

- first review the entire test; then read the directions twice
- write down important formulas, facts, definitions and/or keywords in the margins so you don't worry about forgetting them
- work on the easiest portions first
- for essay questions, construct a short outline for yourself – then begin your answer with a summary sentence to help you avoid rambling
- if you have difficulty with a written response, show what knowledge you can and if the proper terminology eludes you, show what you know in your own words

DURING THE TEST: BASIC STRATEGIES

- for multiple choice questions, read all the responses first, then eliminate the most obvious
- rely on your first impression but beware of tricky words such as “only,” “always,” or “most”
- do not rush through the test but wear a watch to pace yourself
- if you are running out of time, focus on the portions of the test you know well and any heavily weighted portions (i.e., essays)

DURING THE TEST: ANXIETY CONTROL

- tell yourself “I can be anxious later, now is the time to take the exam”
- focus on answering the question, not your grade or others’ performances
- counter negative thoughts with other, more valid thoughts like, “I don’t have to be perfect”
- tense and relax muscles throughout your body; take a couple of slow breaths and try to maintain a positive attitude

DURING THE TEST: ANXIETY CONTROL

- if allowed, get a drink or go to the bathroom
- ask the instructor a question
- eat something
- break your pencil lead – then go sharpen it
- think for a moment about the post-exam reward you promised yourself

AFTER THE TEST

- whether you did well or not, be sure to follow through on the reward you promised yourself
- try not to dwell on all the mistakes you might have made
- do not immediately begin studying for the next test – indulge in something relaxing for a little while

That the birds of worry and care fly
over you head, this you cannot
change, but that they build nests in
your hair, this you can prevent

~ Chinese Proverb ~