

Test-Taking Tips

Do you sweat, chew your pencil, and feel butterflies in your stomach as your teacher hands out a test? A lot of people (adults included) get freaked out when it's time to take a test.

It's natural to feel some stress about taking tests. In fact, sometimes a little adrenaline (a hormone made by your body during times of excitement or stress) is a good thing to jump-start you.

Here are some tips for taking tests:

- **First, be sure you've studied properly.** It sounds like a no-brainer, but if you're sure of the information, you'll have less reason to be worried.
- **Get enough sleep the night before the test.** Your memory recall will be much better if you've had enough rest. In a scientific study, people who got enough sleep before taking a math test did better than those who stayed up all night studying.
- **Listen closely to any instructions.** As the teacher hands out the test, be sure you know what's expected of you.
- **Read the test through first.** Once you have the test paper in front of you, read over the entire test, checking out how long it is and all the parts that you are expected to complete. This will allow you to estimate how much time you have for each section and ask the teacher any questions. If something seems unclear before you start, don't panic: ask.
- **Focus on addressing each question individually.** As you take the test, if you don't know an answer, don't obsess over it. Instead, answer the best way you can or skip over the question and come back to it after you've answered other questions.
- **Relax.** If you're so nervous that you blank out, you might need a mini-break. Of course you can't get up and move around in the middle of a test, but you can wiggle your fingers and toes, take four or five deep breaths, or picture yourself on a beach or some other calm place. As we all know, it can be easy to forget things we know well — like a locker combination. The difference is we know we'll remember our locker combination because we've used it hundreds of times, so we don't panic and the combination number eventually comes back. During a test, if you blank out on something and start to get tense, it suddenly becomes much more difficult to remember.
- **Finished already?** Although most teachers will let you hand a test in early, it's usually a good idea to spend any extra time checking over your work. You also can add details that you may not have thought you'd have time for. On the other hand, if you have 5 minutes until the bell rings and you're still writing, wind up whatever you're working on without panicking.