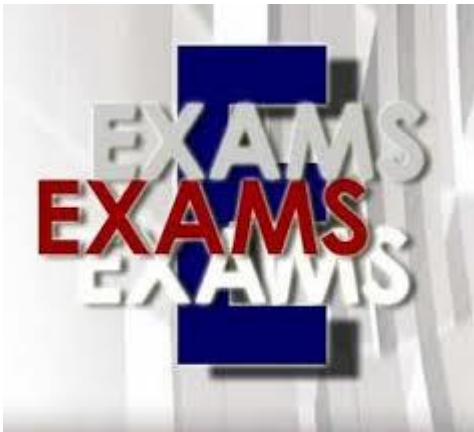


Study Skills Workshop: Dealing with Stress: Exams/Tests/Class Presentations



Career Services/Academic Advising, Student Life

For more information/questions

Place in Email Subject Line: 'Study Smart'

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

Three Pillars of Test Performance

Preparation

- Start studying early: prepare daily
- Develop test-taking skills: practice with old exams
- Use time management strategies to plan your study time
- Organize your review and set study goals
- Use active study strategies: flash cards, outlines, study sheets
- Practice relaxation exercises
- Eat properly, sleep adequately, exercise regularly

Relaxation

- Deep breathing
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Hobbies

Positive Thinking

- Changing negative thoughts to neutral or positive thoughts
- Visualizations
- Journaling

Preparing for Exams: A Self-Assessment

Do you do the following activities? Check the statements if they are activities you do now. Work to develop all these productive study habits.

TEXTBOOK

1. ____ Survey the material in the textbook.
2. ____ Read the material carefully and ensure understanding.
3. ____ Ask myself questions as I read material.
4. ____ Recall and recite in my own words what I read.
5. ____ Make notes and summaries of key points.
6. ____ Review soon after reading my text.
7. ____ Review frequently.

NOTES

1. ____ Review my notes right after class.
2. ____ Make sure my notes are dated and in order.
3. ____ Make sure my notes are complete.
4. ____ Make sure my notes make sense and I understand the key ideas.
5. ____ Summarize my notes into 10 pages of exam notes for the course.

RECITATION

1. ____ Decide what I need to memorize.
2. ____ Recite important information aloud in my own words.
3. ____ Practise by telling another person (study buddy).
4. ____ Practise writing information down.
5. ____ Check to be sure that what I recalled and recited was correct.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE EXAM

1. ____ Find out as much as I can about the exam.
2. ____ Ask my teacher what will be covered on the exam.
3. ____ Find out how long the exam will be.
4. ____ Know what types of questions will be asked, e.g. multiple question, etc.
5. ____ Find out if I can take anything into the exam, e.g. open-book exam.
6. ____ Know if the exam will be like the tests and quizzes.
7. ____ Know which part of the course and the textbook will be covered.
8. ____ Know the exact date, time and place of the exam.

Symptoms of Stress

Physical

- Accident proneness
- Alteration of heart rhythms
- Backaches
- Chest pains
- Chronic fatigue
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Difficulty swallowing
- Dizziness
- Dry mouth or throat
- Excessive sleeping
- Excessive sweating
- Facial or jaw pains
- Frequent colds or flu
- Frequent urination
- Gain or loss in weight
- Head aches
- Heartburn
- High blood pressure
- Increased allergies
- Indigestion
- Insomnia
- Menstrual irregularities
- Muscle aches
- Nausea
- Neck pains
- Rapid or difficult breathing
- Rashes, hives, skin problems
- Sexual inadequacy
- Speech difficulties
- Stomach pains
- Swollen joints
- Twitching eyelid or other facial feature
- Ulcers
- Ulcers on tongue
- Vomiting
- Weakness

Emotional

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Episodes of crying
- Feelings of helplessness or frustration
- Feelings of losing control
- Feelings of panic
- Impulsive behaviour
- Irritability
- Lack of interest in sex
- Loss of memory or concentration
- Moodiness
- Nervousness over little things
- Neurotic behaviour
- Nightmares
- Over-excitability
- Periods of confusion
- Restlessness
- Thoughts of suicide
- Unusual aggressiveness
- Withdrawal from people

Behavioural

- Chronic procrastination
- Chronic tardiness
- Compulsive dieting
- Compulsive eating
- Foot or finger tapping
- Grinding teeth
- Hair pulling or twirling
- High pitched nervous laughter
- Increased alcohol consumption
- Increased smoking
- Increased use of prescribed medications
- Loss of interest in appearance
- Nail biting
- Pacing the floor
- Sudden change in social habits

Relaxation Techniques

Guided Relaxation Exercise:

As with all relaxation exercises, first turn off any music, television, phones, or anything else likely to distract you. Sit in a comfortable, upright position or lie down. When you are settled, imagine that a wave of relaxation is spreading through your entire body. Let go of any holding in your jaw. Let your lips part and your upper and lower teeth separate slightly. Without changing your facial expression, imagine the feeling of a smile. Grow that radiant, open innocence, the joyousness beyond a smile. After a moment, bring the feeling of a smile to your heart and linger there in your imagination. Then feel a smile in both lungs and in the space between your shoulder blades. From there bring the feeling of a smile to your abdominal organs and digestive system, your lower back, your pelvis and reproductive organs, and both legs. Finally feel your whole body as one large open radiant smile. Feel yourself as the embodiment of a smile, your whole being renewed, reverberating with the presence of a smile. Every cell is smiling.

From: McCall, T. (2007). *Yoga as medicine: The yogic prescription for health and healing*. New York: Bantam Dell.

Sitting Meditation

Set aside a time every day for just being. Five minutes would be fine, or ten or twenty or thirty if you want to venture that far. Sit down and watch the moments unfold, with no agenda other than to be fully present. Use the breath as an anchor to tether your attention to the present moment. Your thinking mind will drift here and there, depending on the currents and winds moving in the mind until, at some point, the anchor line grows taut and brings you back. This may happen a lot. Bring your attention back to the breath, in all its vividness, every time it wanders. Keep the posture erect but not stiff. Think of yourself as a mountain.

From: Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Wherever you go there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. New York: Hyperion.

How To Meditate: Simple and Effective Strategies

By Elizabeth Scott, M.S.

Ask about

Mindfulness Meditation

at The University of Winnipeg

Self-talk and Worry Thoughts

Self-talk refers to the thoughts that are always going through our minds. These thoughts strongly influence our emotions and behaviour. If these thoughts are predominantly negative, they will stimulate negative or self-defeating emotions and affect our behaviour negatively, setting up a negative cycle.

Negative thoughts

(“None of these questions look familiar!”)

Physical reactions

(sweating, upset stomach, dizziness)

Negative emotions

(fear, panic, defeat)

Negative Behaviour

(wanting to hand in paper and leave)

We can try to break into this cycle by replacing our negative self-talk with kinder, neutral or more positive statements.

Positive thoughts

(“I studied, I’m prepared, I’ll do the best I can.”)

Physical reactions

(breathing easier, clearer thinking, calm stomach)

Positive emotions

(hope, challenge)

Positive Behaviour

(start by answering the easiest questions first)

This is a healthy skill to develop which can have a positive influence on other areas of your life. Like any skill, it takes practice to develop.

Courtesy of L Walker, The University of Winnipeg, Counselling Services

CLASS PRESENTATIONS

Be prepared and practice! A good presentation will include the following elements:

Introduction: Get the interest and attention of your audience.

- Use a relevant quote, story, question, or research,
- State your topic, relate it to the audience; preview points/ideas to be presented,
- Establish personal and professional credibility.

Body: Deliver the central idea using main points and bolster it with strong evidence that can convince the audience to support your point of view.

- Present points in logical sequence (e.g. chronological, causal, problem-solution); draw conclusions based on fact, logic, and solid evidence,
- Use connectives such as transitions and signposts to facilitate audience understanding,
- Establish and maintain credibility by presenting correct, concise, concrete, and complete information,
- Support ideas and opinions with relevant examples, statistics, or expert testimony,
- Provide an appropriate amount of information within the allotted time.

Conclusion: Strengthen the audience's commitment to your message.

- Signal the end of the presentation; reinforce central ideas with a clear summary,
- Use an appropriate quotation, dramatic statement, call to action, or refer to introduction to deliver a memorable conclusion.

Delivery: Present in a professional, confident, and enthusiastic manner.

- Use an audible voice with effective variations in volume, pace, & inflection
 - Be confident so as not to lose credibility. Pace is important. We speak faster than we write and understand.
 - Give your audience time to take in what you say.
- Establish eye contact with entire audience: when presenting to a larger group, scan the audience.
- Understand your audience; tailor your content depending on the level of knowledge and expectations.
- Listen to what your audience has to say, whether it is spoken or not; learning how to read and interpret cues is part of being a successful communicator.
- Use natural, spontaneous, and appropriate gestures to reinforce ideas
 - Body language must establish interest and sincerity toward your audience,
 - Carry your body in an open manner; don't cross your arms,
 - Use a natural stance and good posture.
- Used notes and/or visuals effectively.

Be a Good Audience Member: It can be frightening to stand in front of a peer group, so be receptive and warm to help alleviate nervousness and contribute to a successful presentation.

- Be quiet, sit still, look at the speaker, smile when the speaker uses humor, and nod at appropriate times.

Before you give a presentation Checklist

Adapted from [University of Leicester](#), Learning Development

Before you give a presentation you might want to work your way through this checklist.

Preparation

- I have rehearsed my presentation.
- I have rehearsed my presentation in front of a mirror.
- I have given my presentation a trial run to a friend or colleague.
- I have checked that my presentation runs to the time allotted.
- I have taped/videoed myself and listened back to it.
- I have prepared speaker notes or cue cards.
- I have annotated my notes to help me get the emphasis right.
- I have thought about where to take a breath.
- I have numbered my notes in case I drop them.
- I have prepared any visual aids that I may need.
- I have prepared any handouts that I wish to give out.
- I have checked my facts.
- I have done a grammar/spell check.

Technical

- I have confirmed that the audio-visual equipment I require will be in the room.
- I have saved my PowerPoint presentation onto at least two formats (disc/USB/hard drive/email).
- I have practised using any unfamiliar technology that I am going to use.
- I have sourced an alternative version of any audio or video material (DVD and VHS).
- I have seen the room that I am going to be presenting in or had it described to me.
- I have turned off my cell phone.
- I have checked the start time.

Audience and Other Speakers

- I have thought about who is going to be in the audience.
- I have brainstormed a list of likely questions that I may be asked.
- I have found out who else will be speaking and what they will be speaking about.
- I have thought about any special needs my audience may have.
- I have thought about ways to engage the audience in my presentation.

Personal

- I have got enough sleep the night before.
- I have considered how to combat my nervousness—remember to breathe.
- I have thought about my personal appearance, how to stand, what to do with my hands.
- I have looked after my health in the week preceding the presentation.
- I have brought a bottle of water to drink if my throat gets dry.
- I have thought about what else I am going to be doing that day.
- I've eaten breakfast.