



# Managing Exam Time Stress and Anxiety

## Before the Exam

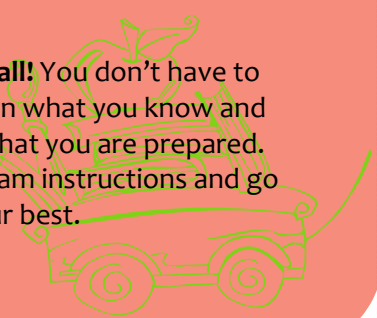
Preparing for exams can be stressful. There are things you can do to stay relaxed and feeling good. Here are some tips for preparing for exams:

- 👉 **Practice self-care.** This means getting enough sleep, eating and sleeping well, getting some exercise and taking breaks from studying.
- 👉 **Set realistic goals.** Perfection is not achievable so don't aim for it! Consider your strengths and weaknesses. This can help you identify areas you might need to spend more time on when preparing for exams.
- 👉 **Build your confidence.** Be positive about what you know, not negative about what you don't.
- 👉 **Limit caffeine.** The effects of caffeine are short-lived and can leave you feeling jittery, restless, and unable to relax. Coffee, tea, pop, and energy drinks all contain caffeine.
- 👉 **Be prepared.** Being prepared for an exam helps reduce feelings of stress and anxiety and also builds confidence. Space out your studying and take breaks to relax and be calm.
- 👉 **Relax.** Try practicing deep abdominal breathing. This technique helps your body and mind relax and you can use it during an exam if you are feeling anxious.

## During the Exam

Some anxiety is normal and can help motivate us to be prepared and work towards goals but high levels of anxiety can leave us feeling overwhelmed. Here are some tips for lowering anxiety during exams:

- 👉 **Relax yourself.** As you are waiting for the exam to start or papers to be distributed, try taking a few slow, deep breaths.
- 👉 **One question at a time.** Try to focus on the question you are answering versus worrying about how you have answered other questions. At the end of the exam you can go back and revise your answers.
- 👉 **Use positive self-talk.** Say to yourself "I can do this," and "It will be ok," or use other kind and encouraging thoughts. If you hit a tough question thoughts like "I did the best I could," can be helpful.
- 👉 **Focus on yourself.** Ignore other students who might finish before you. Take the time that you need. Finishing after others does not mean that you have done poorly and they have done well.
- 👉 **Take a mini break.** Use 30 seconds or a minute to close your eyes, stretch your muscles, and breathe slowly and deeply.
- 👉 **No one knows it all!** You don't have to get 100%. Focus on what you know and remind yourself that you are prepared. Read over the exam instructions and go for it! Just do your best.



## After the Exam

Phew! You got through it. Here are some tips to follow after your exam:

- 👉 **Reward yourself.** Engage in a healthy and fun activity that you enjoy. Get outside, catch up with friends, or read something because you want to!
- 👉 **Reenergize.** It's possible that you have been working really hard lately! Catch up on rest, relaxation, eating well, and exercise.
- 👉 **Learn from it.** Think of each exam as an opportunity to learn something new. Were the questions asked what you expected and prepared for? Is there something you can change in the way you study that might help you next time?
- 👉 **Move on.** This is not the time to worry about how you did. You gave it your best shot. Reflecting on the experience can be helpful but feeling excessive worry, dread, fear, or remorse is not.
- 👉 **Clear your mind.** If you have another exam coming up spend time preparing for it. Shift your focus to the task at hand and gently push distracting thoughts aside. There will be time to think about other thoughts later.
- 👉 **Be happy!** You got through your exam and chances are you have learned something valuable from the experience regardless of the mark you will receive. Summer is around the corner and allowing yourself to get excited about enjoying time off might help you to feel great!



## If you need help

We can't always cope with stress or problems alone- everyone needs support sometimes! Here are some tips on getting support:

- 👉 **Connect with a caring adult.** Tell someone about what is going on in your life. Try a teacher, guidance counsellor, family member, coach, or other caring adult.
- 👉 **Talk about your feelings.** Share how you feel with someone you trust. This could be a friend, family member, or other safe and caring person you trust.
- 👉 **Get help.** If a friend comes to you for help and the problem feels bigger than you can handle, seek the help of a caring adult.
- 👉 **Healthy coping.** Remember to face stress and solve problems in healthy ways.
- 👉 **Write it out.** Sometimes it can be tough to talk about what's on your mind. Try Kids Help Phone "Ask us Online" feature. You can ask a question anonymously and a counsellor will respond.

**Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868**  
**[www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)**

