

Test Strategies & Managing Test Anxiety

CSUEB Math & STEM Lab



Study Strategies



Be Prepared: Study Early

- Avoid procrastinating: start studying early to avoid stress. Studying a little each day will help you better retain information.
- Practice and then practice some more! Repetition and active learning will help you feel more comfortable taking a test in the future.



Set up a Study Schedule

Block off time in your schedule to study for each class. Utilize your breaks between classes and other free time in your schedule. Make sure you are planning what and when you will be studying for the week. Write a list of topics to study and then break it down into small tasks.

Consider trying different study methods, such as the Pomodoro method, to help with pacing. This method states to study for 25 minutes and take a 5 minute break.



Create your Ideal Study Area



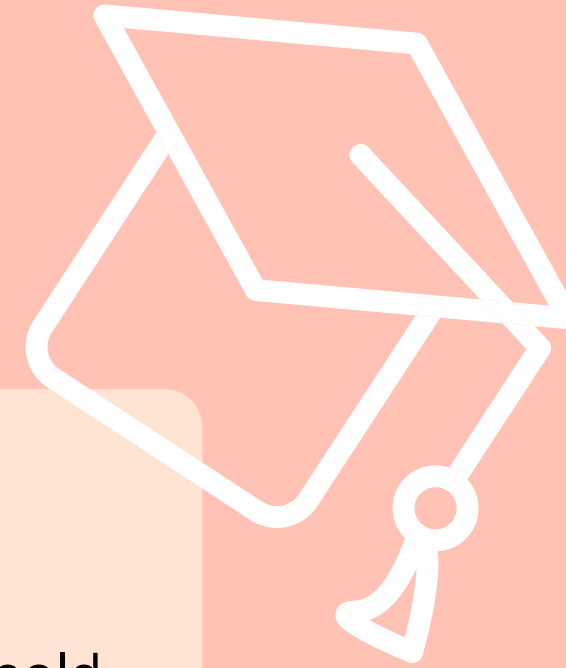
- Find a clean area where you can sit comfortably and focus well.
- Avoid studying in bed. You will start getting comfortable and may end up distracted or falling asleep.
- Have a plan ready. Know where and when you will take your exam. Make sure you won't have distractions and your area is clean and ready to go.

Lessen Distractions

01 Try apps that can help turn off notifications from your phone such as the Fora app, which can be found in the app store.

02 Lock your phone away or put it in another room if you need to — don't be afraid to ask someone to hold you accountable if necessary.

03 Reward yourself with activities that would typically distract you. (e.g. After your 25 minutes of studying, then reward yourself with 5 minutes of social media.)



Music



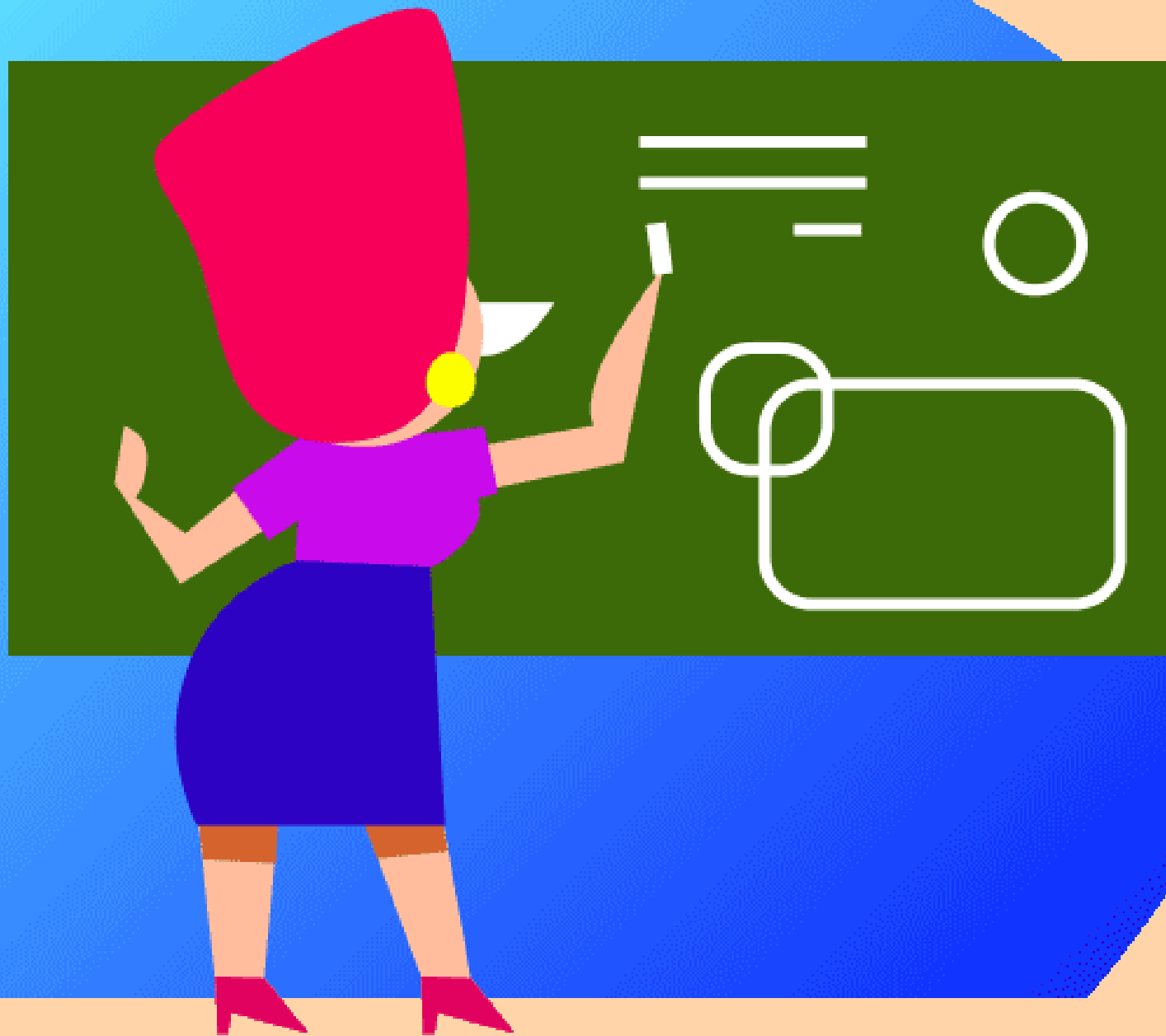
- Find a playlist that increases your productivity. There are study playlists already created on Spotify!
- Using music without lyrics or genres such as jazz, low-fi, classical, and more can help you focus.
- Study for the duration of an album, take a break, and do the same with another album. Make sure it is not too distracting!

Write it Down

Take notes during class and write any questions you want to ask your professor about later on.

Keep your mind engaged!

After class, review, rewrite, and organize your notes with colored pens and highlighters. Make sure you understand what the professor went over in class.



Speak up and ask for help.



- While you study, questions might come up! Keep a record of these questions and seek support from peers or your professor.
- Go to professors' office hours and the Math and STEM Lab to help you understand the topics you are unsure about.
- If you are unable to attend office hours, you can send your questions to your professor or LA via email. Make sure to include as much context as possible!
- Form study groups with classmates. You can quiz each other, exchange information, and help each other ace that test.
- There are other resources online and on-campus, such as the SCAA, to get help. Please see www.csueastbay.edu/mathlab/resources for more resources.
- Support will always be available; We just have to ask!

Test Taking Strategies



Preparing for an Online Test

If you are in a shared space:

- Make sure your device is charged ahead of time or have a charger ready during the exam.
- Take your phone, tablets, and extra devices off of wifi.
- Tell the folks you live with that you will be taking a test. If possible, ask them to reduce their wifi use and/or stay quiet to help you focus.

If your wifi goes out: Plan for what you will do.

- Restart your wifi router
- Email your professor

*Note: Professors may have different policies and procedures if you encounter technical difficulties during an exam. Refer to your syllabus or ask your professor if you have questions or concerns.



Read Directions Carefully

Make sure you completely understand the instructions.
Some examples to look out for:

- Can more than one answer be correct?
- Are you penalized for guessing?
- Can you go back to revisit questions?
- Reminder: Never assume you know what the directions say.



Manage your Time

- Do not stress over time, but do be aware. Make sure you have enough time to do every question once and check your responses.
- Doing a scan of the test at the very beginning can help you plan your test out.
- Do not spend too much time on a question you don't know. Answer the ones you are confident in and then revisit the more challenging questions.



Strategize: Scenarios

Scenario: I am able to access all of the questions on my test at all times.

Strategy: Answer questions in which you are most confident first. If you are unsure about a question, flag it and come back to attempt it later on. Review your answers at the end.

Scenario: I see the questions on my test one by one, and I am unable to go back. I am not penalized for wrong answers.

Strategy: Manage your time well. Notice how much time you have, how many questions you need to answer, and the types of questions. Budget extra time for free-response questions, especially if they are at the end. Make educated guesses if you are unsure and need to proceed to the rest of the test.



Mind Dump

Doing a mind dump helps you put your thoughts to paper and can help you release some of the pressure during the test. Examples of what to write down:



- Once the test begins, make notes of anything you think you might forget, such as important formulas, people, or dates.
- Write down things that you used in learning the material that might help you remember.
- Outline your answers to discussion questions.

Read Questions Carefully



- Circle keywords and focus on the central point of the question.
- Notice language that is extreme or exaggerated (e.g. always, never). This exaggerated language can turn a sentence from true to false or vice versa using only one word.
- If needed, write down the question and underline the subject, verb, and any other keywords.
- Ask for clarification if necessary.

Managing Test Anxiety



Self-Care is Essential!

Good study habits and practicing self-care can increase confidence and help manage test anxiety.

- Exercise to blow off steam and keep a healthy body. Make sure you are getting outside, especially when going to school and working from home.
- Fuel your body with healthy foods that give you energy.
- Stay hydrated by drinking lots of water.
- Get enough sleep. Sleep helps you retain and process information. Also, you don't want to fall asleep during a test. Give yourself enough energy to power through!



Practice Taking the Test



- When studying, put yourself in the same exact environment as you would be during the test.
- For example, if your test is one hour and closed notes, take a practice test in a similar environment for that allotted time without notes. Putting yourself into this situation ahead of time will help you understand what topics you may still need to review.



Arrive Early

Give yourself time to settle in and take deep breaths. This will help you relax and focus before the test.

This time should be spent getting in the right mindset and headspace for the exam.

Avoid talking to people or cramming material. This can make you more nervous.

Positive Attitude & Self-Talk

Tell Yourself:

- I am prepared for this test.
- Even if I don't do well, it's not the end of the world.
- I am capable enough to do well.

Don't Tell Yourself:

- I should have studied more.
- I must be stupid.
- I have to do well, everything is on the line.

Don't think negatively about your potential score.

You are not expected to get 100% on the exam.

Trust yourself and do your best.



Relaxation Techniques

- Make sure to keep your body moving. Do neck rolls, and move your shoulders around.
- To help you stay calm and confident right before and during the test, perform relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, relaxing your muscles one at a time, or closing your eyes and imagining a positive outcome.

