

RELIEVING EXAM ANXIETY TECHNIQUES FOR APPRENTICES

Writing exams makes most everyone nervous. It's normal and you can manage it. Practice stress reduction techniques during every study session so you'll be prepared at exam time.

You've studied the textbook, taken notes, looked at resources online, written practice exams and still, you

freeze when you open the exam book. Your mind may go blank. Your hands might start to sweat. Your brain will produce negative thoughts like "I'm not smart enough," I'll never get this." Exam anxiety kicks in when there is pressure to perform and the fear of embarrassment or humiliation. This is normal. You are not alone!

Try these techniques to see what works for you. **Practice them before every study session and when you feel stressed.** Consistent practice will help prepare you for anxious feelings at the exam.



Focus on your successes

- Thoughts are not facts.
- Challenge your negative thinking by focusing on your past successes.
- What happened during your apprenticeship that you are proud of?
- Did you learn to use a tool that was really hard.
- Did you master a skill, did you receive a compliment?
- Write a list of the things you're very proud of.
- Read that list before every study session.
- You'll create a positive mindset that makes you more confident and ready to do your best.



Breathe through it

- Professional athletes, entertainers, astronauts and practically everyone uses breathing techniques to calm themselves, focus and bring out their best.
- Try box breathing when you're stressed. Breathe in through your nose for a count of four.
- Feel your stomach then your chest expand. Hold your breath for four seconds.
- Slowly exhale through your mouth for 4 seconds.
- Repeat these steps until you feel calm.



Picture it

- You can prepare your brain and body for the exam by imagining what it's like to be there.
- Before each study session, in quiet place, breathe slowly and visualize all parts of your exam experience.
- Picture what it will be like to sit in the exam room and open the exam book.
- Imagine looking at the first question and knowing the answer.
- Visualize looking at a difficult question and thinking through it.
- Finally, imagine walking out of the testing centre feeling like you've done enough to pass.
- The more you practice, the more prepared you'll feel.

Useful Resources

Overcoming Exam Anxiety

<https://www.athabasca.ca/support-services/tutoring-learning-support/learning-tools/overcoming-exam-anxiety.html>

Shifting from Negative Self-Talk to Positive

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/wellness-recreation/student-health-and-wellness/wellu/2020/node/62027>

7 Tips to Beat Exam Anxiety

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyBdA61GmJ0>

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Improving your **Study Habits** will make you feel more confident to write your



Plan and Take Space

- Give yourself lots of time to learn the material.
- Studies show that learning over a longer period of time with breaks in between sessions (instead of cramming) helps us to remember the information better.
- Break the material into chunks and plan what you will study in each session so that you don't feel overwhelmed.
- Also, starting early will give you time to get assistance if you need it.
- Make yourself accountable by writing your sessions on a calendar.
- Schedule days off and holidays. You learn better when you take space and give yourself planned time off.



Taking breaks helps you learn

- You can't study for hours at peak performance. It can also be discouraging.
- Use cognitive neuroscience to your advantage. According to engineer and author Barbara Oakley, your brain has a Focused mode and a Diffuse mode.
- In Focus mode, you are active--analyzing, memorizing and learning.
- In the diffuse mode, you are doing something entirely different like sleeping or exercising and this gives your brain the opportunity to connect information and create insight. information and create insight. 4 seconds.
- Repeat these steps until you feel calm.



Study in short periods

- The Pomodoro technique says that you should work for 25 minutes at a time then take a 5-minute break.
- After 4 cycles of 25 minutes, you can take a longer break. Decide what you are going to work on for the 25-minute cycle.
- The idea is that we can all push ourselves to do something for 25 minutes.



Turn off your phone

- Eliminate as many distractions as possible.
- Put your phone away, silence notifications on your laptop, turn off the tv and don't listen to music where you want to sing along.
- If you are going to work in short periods to help your brain learn better then you have to focus.



Take Care of your Body

- Make sure you get enough sleep while you're studying and especially the night before the exam.
- Give your brain a chance to reset and consolidate information. Exercise improves blood flow and will also give you stress release.
- Exercise can even be as simple as a walk outside.
- Your brain needs balanced energy of proteins, carbohydrates and fat. Eat well to promote learning.

Useful Resources

The Pomodoro Technique
<https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique>

A Mind for Numbers Summary—Barbara Oakley
<https://theartofliving.com/a-mind-for-numbers-summary/>

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Improving The Way Study will help you feel more confident and less anxious.



Eat the frog first

The frog is the most difficult or unpleasant task or concept. You can give it the most focused attention if you tackle it first. Once you've eaten the frog, everything else will seem easier.



Teach

Explain what you're learning to your spouse, your dog or the wall. This will help you improve your retrieval of information. Reading something over and over is pointless. You need to work on recalling it so it transfers to your long-term memory. Flashcards are also a good technique. Try to answer the question before flipping over the card to read it.



Mix it up

Don't study one concept for a long period of time. Mix things up. That's the way tests are created, they move between different concepts. We also learn more when we vary the content instead of reading or practicing the same thing over and over.



Connect with others

If you have a question, chances are others have it too. You are not alone! Form a study group. Figure out what you don't know. Break it down into pieces. Allocate time in the group for each member.



Write don't type

There's a connection between the hand and the brain. Students retain more information when they take notes by hand instead of typing them using a laptop. (Doubek, 2016) When learners are writing, they listen actively to write "summaries" of key concepts because they can't write as fast as the presenter is speaking. This "extra processing" improves their learning.

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FORUM



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Find out what's on the exam and practice! There are many resources to help you pass the Red Seal Exam.



Red Seal Standards

What is on this exam? Where should I focus my studying? The exam is based on the Red Seal Standard. It outlines everything that a tradesperson needs to know about their trade including:

- trade activities (tasks and sub-tasks)
- skills and knowledge requirements
- summary of essential skills
- safety information
- trends affecting the trade
- technical terms
- names of tools and equipment
- acronyms

Additionally, where new standards are being developed:

- learning objectives and outcomes
- industry expected performance

You can find the Red Seal Standard for your trade online. If there is no standard for your trade, you should look at online at your local provincial/territorial regulating body's website.



Red Seal Preparation Guide

This guide found at gives you all the details about what to expect when writing the exam. It is full of helpful tips:

- preparation how-tos
- explanation of sub-tasks
- study plan
- exam format
- trade terminology
- evaluation of online resource strategy
- stress and anxiety tips
- rules of the Exam Room
- tips for writing multiple choice exams



Control what you can

- Make sure you know what "paperwork" you need like proof of payment or photo ID.
- Go to the exam centre the week before the exam to see where you'll park or the route from the bus stop.
- The night before the exam get as much sleep as you can.
- On the day exam arrive early so you can pick your favourite seat.
- All of these things will make you more confident and ease your stress.



Practice using the Sample Examination Questions

- Exam questions are available for many trades online at the Red Seal website.
- Practice as often as you can. This builds muscle memory and helps you with picturing how you will think through challenging questions.
- It will also help you practice moving around between areas of a concept.

Useful Resources

The Red Seal Standard

https://www.red-seal.ca/trades/tr.1d.2s_l.3st-eng.html

Red Seal Preparation Guide

<https://www.red-seal.ca/resources/g.2tr.2.1dy-eng.html>

Red Seal Sample Examination Questions

https://www.red-seal.ca/resources/s.1mpl.2_q.5.2st.3.4ns-eng.html