

# **Test Strategies & Test Anxiety**

# Marshal Your Resources

- **If you're studying hard, you're doing something wrong**
  - Using your time-management system, you can break down the information into small segments so you can LEARN as you go along
  - If you are LEARNING the information then you will only need to review it as the test approaches
  - Students who spend hours and hours studying for tests are trying to learn everything from scratch when they should have been learning it all along

# Define the challenge



**What information does the professor want you to know?**

- What lectures and reading assignments are fair game?
- What types of questions are on the test, and how many of each?
- Open book/note test?
- Will formulas be provided or do they need to be memorized?
- How much time will be available?

# Build a study guide

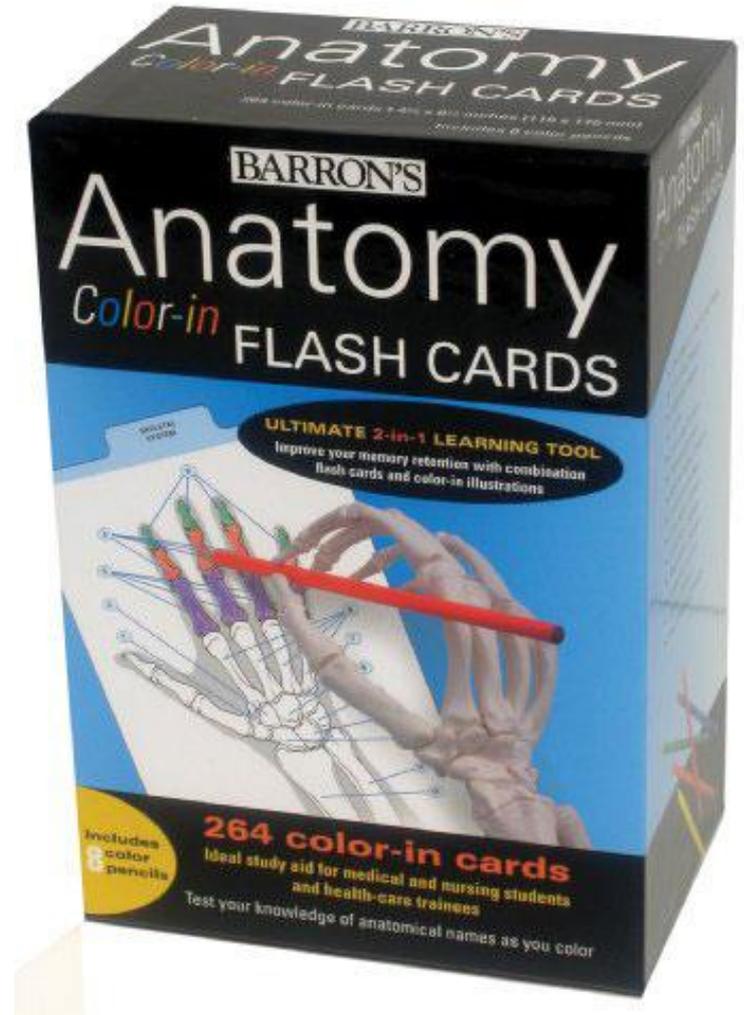
- For Nontechnical classes
- Find all your notes on the information that will be tested
  - If your notes are typed, simply create a new document and pull notes from each piece of information to be tested and clearly label each topic
  - If your notes are handwritten, pull notes out of your notebook and label and staple all the notes on the topic together (or type the notes and label as noted above)

# Construct a Mega-Problem Set

1. Match the lecture to the problem set that covers the same material
2. Copy sample problems from these lecture notes onto a blank sheet of paper (not the steps or answers)
3. Label the blank sheet of paper with the date of the lecture
4. Fasten this sheet with a paper clip to the problem set you matched it to in step one

# Prepare Memorization Aids

- Some material requires memorization
  - Formulas, chemical equations, artwork, dates
- Use flash cards
  - Create them at least one-week before the test



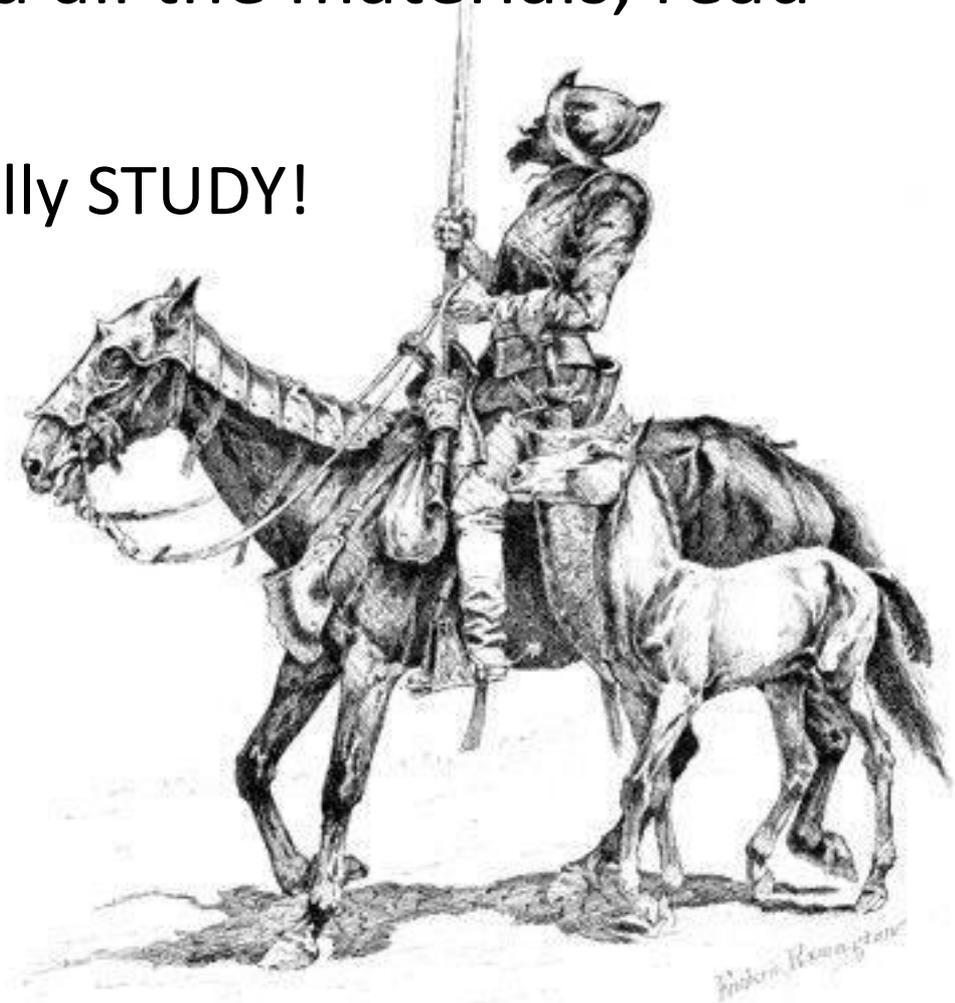
# Schedule Your Organization Wisely

- Don't organize your study materials for a test AND study on the same day
  - Keep these tasks separate!



# Conquer the Material

- After you've organized all the materials, read all the assignments...
  - Now it's time to actually STUDY!



# Trust the Quiz-and Recall Method

- The most effective way to imprint a concept in your mind is to...
  - **First, Review it**
  - **Second, Try to explain it**
    - If you close your eyes are able to construct the argument from scratch (auditory learners) or are able to write it down (visual, read/write, kinesthetic) you KNOW that you have fully imprinted the material in your mind
    - Recall Blooms Taxonomy from Week 1 & 2?

# Using the Quiz-and-Recall Method for Nontechnical Courses

- Create practice quizzes based on your self-made study guide
  - Try to cover all the material in your notes
- Once you've built the quizzes, go through them one by one to be sure you can articulate the “conclusions” and some of the “evidence”
- Going over these answers in your head, out-loud or writing the information down (does not need to be formal) will help you reinforce the information
  - Place checkmarks next to questions you struggle with, review the notes and textbook and come back to them again until all the check marks are gone
  - **Do NOT keep going over information that you understand**

# Using the Quiz-and-Recall Method for Technical Courses

- If you created your study guide, you have all the problem sets ready
  - Try to answer each, showing your work (as you would on the test)
  - As before, if you have a hard time with one of the problems, put a check mark by it
  - Return to the quiz until all check marks are gone
    - This may involve Tutor help!



# Memorize over Time

- If you already made the flashcards, simply review cards in short bursts
  - Do NOT review flash cards for an hour...20 minutes tops!
  - Review the information 2 – 3 times a day
  - Remove cards you are consistently getting right until you have no more cards left!
  - If time allows, run through the ALL cards one more time the day before the exam to refresh your memory

# Invest in Academic Disaster Insurance



- Most students “freeze up” from time to time on a test, especially if you see a question that you don’t immediately know the answer to...
  - However, if you manage to keep up your note-taking and asking any questions of the professor or tutor that you need clarified, you should be able to avoid this scary predicament

# Eliminate Your Question Marks

- Ask questions during class
  - Don't leave blank spaces/question marks in notes until the week before the exam
- Develop the habit of talking with your professor after class
  - Go over those blank spots/questions marks right away
  - It's NOT brown-nosing
- Ask Classmates
  - Clear up those "check marks" before the exam by talking to A+ classmates
- Come prepared to exam review sessions (if offered)
  - Do all your study guide preparations and practice quizzes before the review session so "check marks" can be cleared up during the session

# Provide A+ Answers

- Common pitfalls of exam taking are:
  - Running out of time
  - Providing answers that don't fully answer all the parts of the question being asked



# Strategy #1 Review First, Answer Questions Later



- Read through the entire exam first
  - It lets you know what is being covered
  - Allows your mind to prepare for the next questions
  - Helps you relax and decreases your stress

# Strategy #2: Build a Time Budget

- Based on the number of questions and the amount of time to take the test, create a mental “time budget”
  - Give yourself 10 minutes buffer time
  - You can look up at the clock from time to time to make sure you are on track but don’t focus on it!



# Strategy #3: Proceed from Easy to Hard

- Skip questions you cannot immediately answer and come back to them later
- Answer questions in order from easy to hard (this may not be the order in which they are presented)
- The “easy” questions may jog your memory for the “hard” questions

# Strategy #4: Outline Essays

- Don't just start writing and see what happens
- Break down the question
  - There are usually 3 or 4 mini-questions within the question, underline each
- Write down a quick outline
  - Make sure your outline contains the answer for each mini-question



# Strategy #5: Check Your Work

- Write the essay
  - If time permits, check over the essay to make sure each part of the question is answered
  - Check for spelling errors, missed words, or other grammatical errors
- It may feel good to hand in your exam before other students, but the time you take to review your answers will be well worth it!

A close-up photograph of a man with a distressed expression, holding his hands to his head. He has a furrowed brow and a slightly open mouth, conveying a sense of stress or anxiety. The background is dark, making the man's face the central focus.

**TEST ANXIETY**

On average, students who suffer from test anxiety perform 12% below their peers.

**WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS  
OF TEST ANXIETY?**

# PHYSIOLOGICAL OVER-AROUSAL

- perspiration
- sweaty palms
- headache
- upset stomach
- rapid heart beat
- tense muscles
- dry mouth



*...commonly referred to as “emotionality”*

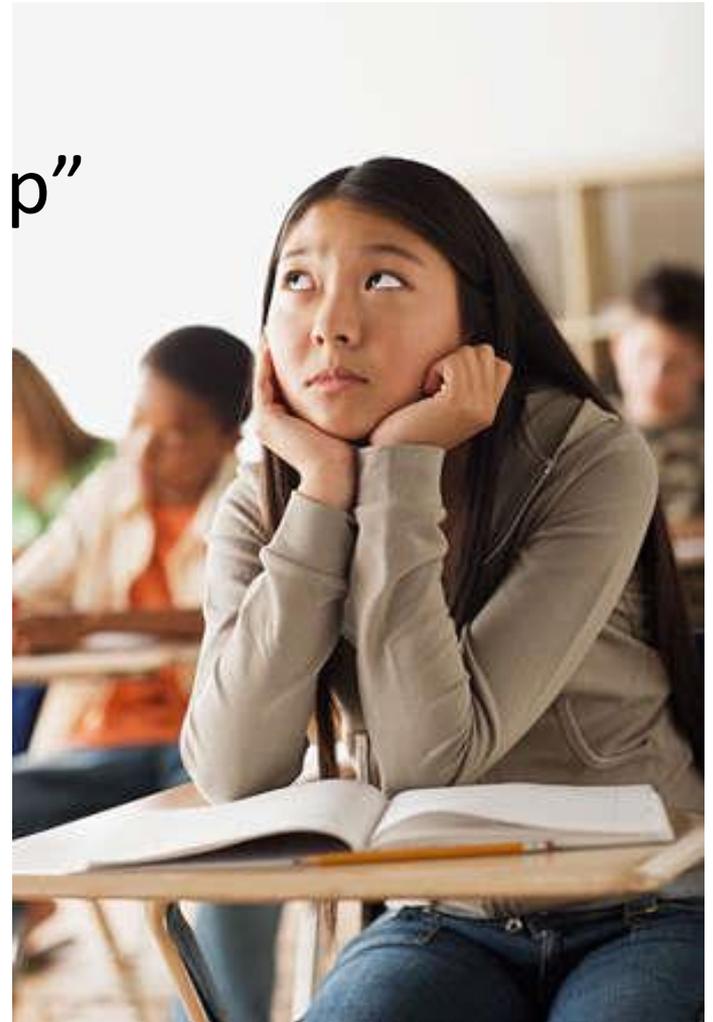
# WORRY & DREAD

- expectations of gloom and doom
- fear of failure
- random thoughts
- feelings of inadequacy
- self-condemnation
- negative self-talk
- comparing yourself unfavorably to others



# IMPAIRMENT

- poor concentration
- “going blank” or “freezing up”
- confusion
- poor organization



**WHAT CAUSES TEST ANXIETY?**

The #1 cause of test anxiety is  
poor preparation!

# CLUES YOU ARE NOT PREPARED



- you “crammed” the night before the test
- you did not review your notes after class
- you did not get enough quality sleep
- you did not do the assignments

# CLUES YOU ARE NOT PREPARED

- you missed class and didn't get the lecture notes from a classmate
- you do not have a good time-management system (i.e., calendar or planner)
- you procrastinated



...other causes of test anxiety include prior adverse experiences, perfectionism, and a social atmosphere that places excessive importance on test results.

**OKAY, I'M PREPARED. WHAT DO I  
DO IF I STILL HAVE ANXIETY?**

# CHANGING YOUR ATTITUDE

- remember that the most reasonable expectation is to try to show as much of what you know as you can
- remind yourself that a test is only a test – there will be others
- avoid thinking of yourself in irrational, all-or-nothing terms
- reward yourself after the test – take in a movie, go out to eat, or visit with friends

# DON'T FORGET THE BASICS

- continue habits of good nutrition and exercise
- continue your recreational pursuits and social activities – all contribute to emotional and physical well-being
- follow a moderate pace when studying; vary your work when possible and take breaks when needed – 45 min on, 15 min off
- get plenty of sleep the night before the test – when you are overly tired, you will not function at your best
- once you feel adequately prepared for the test, do something relaxing

# THE DAY OF THE TEST

- begin your day with a moderate breakfast and avoid coffee, especially if you are prone to “caffeine jitters”
- try to do something relaxing the hour before the test – last minute cramming will cloud your mastering of the overall concepts in the course

# THE DAY OF THE TEST

- plan to arrive at the test location early – this will allow you to relax and to select a seat located away from doors, windows and other distractions
- avoid classmates who generate anxiety and tend to upset your stability
- if waiting for the test causes anxiety, distract yourself by reading a magazine or newspaper

# DURING THE TEST: BASIC STRATEGIES

- first review the entire test; then read the directions twice
- write down important formulas, facts, definitions and/or keywords in the margins so you don't worry about forgetting them
- work on the easiest portions first
- for essay questions, construct a short outline for yourself – then begin your answer with a summary sentence to help you avoid rambling
- if you have difficulty with a written response, show what knowledge you can and if the proper terminology eludes you, show what you know in your own words

# DURING THE TEST: BASIC STRATEGIES

- for multiple choice questions, read all the responses first, then eliminate the most obvious
- rely on your first impression but beware of tricky words such as “only,” “always,” or “most”
- do not rush through the test but wear a watch to pace yourself
- if you are running out of time, focus on the portions of the test you know well and any heavily weighted portions (i.e., essays)

# DURING THE TEST: ANXIETY CONTROL

- tell yourself “I can be anxious later, now is the time to take the exam”
- focus on answering the question, not your grade or others’ performances
- counter negative thoughts with other, more valid thoughts like, “I don’t have to be perfect”
- tense and relax muscles throughout your body; take a couple of slow breaths and try to maintain a positive attitude

# DURING THE TEST: ANXIETY CONTROL

- if allowed, get a drink or go to the bathroom
- ask the instructor a question
- eat something
- break your pencil lead – then go sharpen it
- think for a moment about the post-exam reward you promised yourself

# AFTER THE TEST

- whether you did well or not, be sure to follow through on the reward you promised yourself
- try not to dwell on all the mistakes you might have made
- do not immediately begin studying for the next test – indulge in something relaxing for a little while

That the birds of worry and care fly  
over you head, this you cannot  
change, but that they build nests in  
your hair, this you can prevent

~ Chinese Proverb ~