

INTRODUCTION

You might be thinking, “*We’ve been studying since elementary school, so why would we need help with our study skills?*”

Most everyone has a particular set of study skills that come naturally to them. Other skills may have been developed only with time and practice. You may have tried certain study methods and written them off because you found they didn’t work for you. However, there may be other study skills that you’re unaware of that could be of great help throughout college. Of course, some of you may never have found it necessary to consciously develop study skills, relying instead on an ability to memorize information and learn quickly.

There are assessments available (*which you may have taken*) to help determine your strong points, and identify areas where you can improve. *But what are you supposed to do with that information?*

The purpose of this booklet is to highlight potential problem areas and give you ideas to improve your study skills and get the most out of school. The booklet is separated into ten different study skill areas that have been found to influence your academic success. All sections are fully compatible with LASSI (the Learning & Study Strategies Inventory).

1. **Anxiety** – For times when you feel overwhelmed with worry and nervousness.
2. **Attitude** – Relating your college experience to getting what you want in life.
3. **Concentration** – Finding ways to eliminate distractions and learning to focus your mind at will.
4. **Information Processing** – To help reduce the amount of memorizing needed to study effectively.
5. **Motivation and Goal Setting** – Finding your priorities and values in life and discovering goals you want to work toward.
6. **Selecting Main Ideas** – Learning to identify main points without getting bogged down in supporting details.
7. **Self-Testing** – How to know when you fully understand material and determine when you’re ready to take a test.
8. **Study Aids** – A comprehensive list of study aids with suggestions of how to find the best ones for your learning style and personality type.
9. **Testing Strategies** – Preparing for a test, finding the right frame of mind for exams, and reasoning through questions.
10. **Time Management** – Overcoming procrastination and gaining control over time.

Although we’ve been learning all our lives, many of us were never actually taught how to study and process information. Throughout this booklet we’ve included exercises and asked important questions to help you discover ways of studying and learning that work *for you*.

Take a look at the table of contents: you may choose to read the whole booklet – starting at the beginning – or skip directly to areas where you know you could use some insight or help. [Happy learning from Campus ToolKit!](#)



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ANXIETY

The first thing to know about anxiety is that it is normal. Everyone experiences anxiety to some degree when preparing for a big test and a lot of students worry about doing well in school.

Anxiety is natural. If kept to a manageable level, it can actually be healthy. It can help you perform better in sporting events, speeches or oral reports, and it helps you prepare to meet a challenge – like an important exam.

However, if you worry *too much* about schoolwork or tests, the anxiety can interfere with your performance. Anxiety can quickly become overwhelming – but you can learn to keep it in check.

Let's take a look at what anxiety is:

Very simply, anxiety is fear. Worry, nervousness, concern, the jitters – these are all words people use to describe anxiety.

It's often accompanied by physical reactions in your body. When anxiety is mild, you might only experience butterflies in your stomach or a slightly elevated heart rate. When you are extremely nervous or worried, you can have physical reactions like sweating, cold hands, difficulty concentrating, difficulty sleeping at night, and diarrhea. Your muscles can be tense, your stomach can feel like it's in your throat, and your breathing can become more rapid and shallow.

WHAT THE LASSI ANXIETY SCORE MEANS

The LASSI anxiety scale is designed to assess the amount of anxiety you feel when approaching academic tasks. You might find that you have high anxiety in only one area, like taking major exams, or being required to make a presentation in front of the class. Or, anxiety may cast a shadow over many of your academic experiences. For example, you might worry that you won't do well in school, even when you are well prepared and studying.

Overwhelming anxiety is something that you can learn to overcome. Anxiety is a mind-set and it can be changed.

WHAT A HIGH SCORE IN ANXIETY DOESN'T MEAN

A high LASSI score in anxiety doesn't determine your success or failure in college. It highlights potential problem areas so that you can improve and get the most out of school. LASSI doesn't measure your intelligence and it doesn't determine whether or not you have a learning disability, attention deficit disorder or depression.

Think of a high score as an early “heads up”, and use our tips and exercises to reduce your anxiety now and for the rest of your life.

CONTROLLING ANXIETY

Anxiety is caused by fear: Fear of what may happen, or fear based on something that has happened in the past.



Although fear can feel and appear to be very real, the *reality* is that fear is generated in our minds, based on how we choose to view our situations. Because of this, you can train your mind to overcome anxiety.

Here is a popular way of breaking down the word *fear* that exposes its lack of reality:

F.E.A.R. = False Evidence Appearing Real

Or how about this one:

F.E.A.R. = Fantasized Experience Appearing Real

In other words, Fear is nothing trying to act like something!

Fear is very much like darkness

Darkness does not exist. In our solar system, there is light, and only light. When we cut off light, there is an absence – or removal of light. But we don't say things like, "*Gosh, there sure is an absence of light in this location.*" We say, "*It's dark out here!*"

When we name it, darkness becomes something. We created the word darkness, but darkness doesn't actually exist.

As creations of our mind, fear, worry and anxiety can be compared to darkness. Darkness is the absence of light; anxiety is the absence of confidence. Fortunately, in the same way that turning on the light in a child's dark bedroom banishes the monsters under the bed, we can learn to banish the monsters inhabiting our fearful minds.

THE FIRST STEP TO CONTROLLING ANXIETY – BE PREPARED

Anytime you are facing a situation that you are worried about or that makes you feel nervous, **being prepared will make you feel a lot less anxious.**

Research has proven that the more you prepare, the less anxious you will be.

- A baseball player who's up to bat with the bases loaded is a lot less anxious when he or she has spent hundreds of hours in the batting cage practicing.
- If you've practiced a speech in front of the mirror, friends and family or even a study group, you won't feel as nervous in front of your instructor and the class.
- When you've successfully completed a lot of math practice problems, you won't feel as anxious going into your test.

START ON YOUR PROJECTS AS SOON AS YOU CAN, TO GET THE MOST PREPARATION TIME.

If you suffer from anxiety, getting a head start on projects is a tool you can depend on to feel more relaxed. By procrastinating, you are increasing the risk of anxiety. For handy techniques to stop procrastination, check out the Campus ToolKit Time Management Module online.

FOCUS ON THE TASK, NOT THE ANXIETY

“We either make ourselves miserable, or we make ourselves strong. The amount of work is the same.”

– Carlos Castenada

When you are in a situation that is causing you anxiety, don't focus on how nervous you are, or allow your mind to imagine frightening or negative scenarios. Instead, turn your attention back to the task. By focusing on what you are doing instead of focusing on the anxiety, you'll be able to perform better.

SELF-TALK – CONTROLLING WHAT YOU SAY TO YOURSELF

“We are trampled most often by forces we ourselves create” – William Shakespeare

All of us have a little voice inside that is constantly telling us something. Many times, it speaks very negatively, using phrases like:

I can't handle this	I'll never	It's too late
I'm too dumb	I'm not doing very well here	How do they expect us to learn this?
If only	It's impossible	I'm too fat
I'm too old	I just said something stupid	I'm not math-minded
This is terrible	I'm not _____ enough	I'm too thin
I'm too young	This is too hard	I don't know what I'm doing

Sometimes the voice can be very aggressive and belittling, saying things like:

- See, I told you – you wouldn't be able to do it.
- How could you think you would be able to do that?!
- That was so stupid.

The trick to overcoming negative self-talk is to be aware of it, and correct it with positive self-talk. Focus on your capabilities instead of your deficiencies. Looking at some of the items on the list again, let's see what you could say instead:

I can't handle this	I can learn to handle this
If only	Next time
This is terrible	This is something I will learn from. Or, what can I learn from this?
It's impossible	If I really wanted to, I could
I'm not _____ enough	If I really want to, I can find a way
I'm not doing very well here	I'm learning, and I'll get better
I just said something so stupid	I am OK, and I am learning
This is too hard	I can do this if I stick to it
How do they expect us to learn this?	If I work hard, I can learn this
I'm not math-minded	I am learning math
I don't know what I'm doing	I'm happy to be learning something new



Speak to yourself from a voice of confidence. Even if you don't believe what you are saying at first, just say it. **Acting the part is the first step toward being the part.**

Instead of the weak phrase, *"I'm so sick and tired of this"*, say *"I'm not going to stand for this anymore. I'm going to make some changes."*

Instead of admitting defeat by saying, *"I get very nervous when taking tests"*, say *"I am comfortable when taking tests."*

Day by day, increase your positive self-talk by correcting your negative self-talk when you hear it. Before you know it, positive self-talk will become a welcomed and refreshing habit.

ACTING AS IF

"Act the part and you will feel the part. Feel the part and you will BE the part!" – Foster Hibbard

Along with changing your self-talk, it's important to begin to act as if you are the person you would like to be.

For example:

If you are always late, and you would like to be the type of person who is always on time - or even early - behave the way you think this type of person might. Would they be more aware of time? Would they leave ten minutes earlier, just to be on the safe side? By being aware of what an on-time person would do and acting like them, you'll start to be on time!

If you would like to be the type of person who is enthusiastic and comfortable taking tests, act like you think this type of person would act.

This starts by creating a clear vision of how you would like to be, so that you can give yourself a goal, instead of just wishful thinking.

To create this vision, try the following exercise.

VISUALIZATION EXERCISE

To create a vision of less anxiety, find a quiet spot where you can sit comfortably and you will not be disturbed. Then, just as you would mentally replay a memorable past experience, create in your mind a picture of your new life and behaviors.

Think about what your life would be like, how you would feel at different times, and how you would act if you felt less anxiety. Be specific! The more details, the better your vision will work as a goal.

Think about the following questions, and once you have a clear picture of your "dream life", write the details on something you can keep. Remember, you are answering and creating a vision of how things will be in the future with less anxiety.



1. How will you feel when you're faced with a new task, or are on unfamiliar territory?
2. How will you feel when a big exam is approaching?
3. How will you feel about school?
4. What sorts of things will you say to yourself when faced with a challenging situation?
5. What will you do when you feel worried about something?
6. What types of friends will you have?
7. How will they support you?
8. How would you describe your overall state of mind? Will you feel happy, joyful, excited?
Relaxed, in-control, positive?
9. Do you see yourself learning new things, aside from your course work at school? Are there things you've always dreamed of trying that you are doing now?
10. How will you spend your study time? Have you found a study technique that works best?
What is it?
11. How will you feel and behave in class? Are you relaxed, open, interested...?
12. How will you spend your free time? Do you picture yourself having the time to read, visit your family, connect with friends, make new friends, take classes, exercise or engage in quiet reflection?
13. How will you feel when you drift off to sleep each night?
14. How will you feel when you wake up in the morning?

For the next week as you're going to sleep, and when you're waking up, replay a mental scene of your new life and continually enhance your vision. Read your answers again if you start to lose sight of your vision. The more detail you can add each time you playback, the more you can change your behavior.

How did that exercise go? Hopefully you're excited about your vision. Now that you are clear about what you want, and how you would like to feel, start incorporating these thoughts, feelings, and behaviors into your life today!

Make a decision to change!

CONTROL VS. FAITH

Sometimes our anxiety is a result of wanting to control everything.
Guess what? If you try to control everything, you'll only end up feeling more frustrated.

The only things you can control in life are your thoughts and behavior, at this very moment.

Instead of trying to control everything, just focus on improving your thoughts and actions, making them as positive and supportive of your life vision as possible. If you are able to do these two things, then most of the time you can overcome the external events that you cannot control.

Remember that you control both your thoughts and your actions, and that you'll need to work on each of them.

Having a positive mental outlook alone doesn't mean that you don't need to prepare – the action of practicing and studying are the keys to learning and giving yourself confidence that you can do something.