

Learning to Relax

Many people experience anxiety before a performance or presentation. Practicing relaxation techniques can help you manage your anxiety. Two of the most convenient techniques are *muscular relaxation* and *relaxation imagery*. Both initially require a quiet place and a time when you will not be interrupted.

Go through the following steps, in order:

- 1. Lower or turn off bright lights.
- 2. Take a few slow, deep breaths.
- 3. With your eyes closed, tense and then relax your muscles in this order:

Face

Neck and shoulders

Biceps and triceps

Forearms

Wrists and hands

Chest

Abdomen

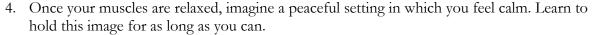
Buttocks/hamstrings

Quadriceps

Calves

Ankles and feet

When you tense your muscles, inhale. When you relax them, exhale.



- 5. Imagine the space where you will give your performance or presentation. If you feel any sign of anxiety, return to the preceding image.
- 6. Continue to imagine the space, and then add yourself to the picture. See yourself calmly seated, enjoying listening to others speak.
- 7. See yourself writing down the requirements of an assigned performance or presentation. See yourself involved with the various stages of preparation, including seeing yourself practice.
- 8. See yourself waiting to be called on, alert but not anxious.
- 9. See yourself speaking energetically, gesturing and using your eyes, face and voice.
- 10. See your peers and your instructor listening attentively.
- 11. See yourself concluding and your audience responding with genuine applause.

Practice this series of steps at least twice a week for between 15 and 25 minutes each time. Remember that any time you begin to feel anxious during this exercise, replace whatever image you're holding with a pleasant and relaxing one.



