

With testing for new rules coming just around the corner, we all get a little anxious and stressed. It doesn't have to be that way! Rather than cramming at the last minute and panicking, take time to prepare and study now. Here are tips that work for many of us.

1. Plan ahead and set goals

Scoring for optional tests is based 50% or more on the film. So plan on studying using videotapes! Get your videotapes lined up NOW. For Level 10 and National tests, I'd suggest the Level 10 practice judging films from USAG and NAWGJ and Elite "Classic" meets or Elite "National" levels of competitions. Many of us like to copy tapes so we have all vaults on 1 tape, all bars on another etc.

Purchase note cards (to make flash cards), 3-M tabs and any other office supplies you might need.

Order study tools from the NAWGJ library— computer programs, DEM cards etc. (Note that these won't be available until a few weeks after the rules are published.)

Set your goals. Be sure they are within your control! For example, setting a goal to finish 1st in the course is outside your control—you don't know how others will do. I usually set two goals—1) To be prepared enough so I know 90% or better on flash cards and/or a computer program BEFORE I head for the course and 2) To stay calm and focused.

2. Prepare

Make up flash cards. (This is good practice for you—you learn as you make them up).

Copy the practical judging sheets so you have lots of them to practice with.

Write out your schedule on a calendar. I like having more time, but for the recent Brevet course only had a month and a half. I allow myself a few days to prepare/do flashcards, and then I schedule an event a day. (i.e. General, Vault, Bars, Beam and Floor). I set a minimum number of video taped routines to judge each day (usually 5, on my general days I would judge 2 on each event.)

3. Study

Follow your planned schedule. Judge your routines and do your flash cards or computer program and QUIT for the day. Track how well you are doing on your schedule—at first you'll be slow and

missing many questions. I would generally study from ½ hour to an hour a day, depending on how quickly the event went.

Try to schedule practice judging with someone else a few times. Once a week worked well for me. Make your practice judging sessions as much like the real test as possible—use the judging sheets, hand in a score.

4. Go to Course or Test

Do NOT let other people's anxieties wear off on you! Walk away from it and follow your plan.

There will always be people more prepared than you are. That's ok.

On test day, do whatever it takes to keep you calm and focused. This year, the group I study with got together an hour before the film and "warmed up" our hands by judging a couple routines per event. Once we were done with an event, we crumpled up our papers and shot them at the wastebasket. We laughed and "threw out" some of our nervous tension with the balls of paper. Often I pace and keep moving around.

Others use deep breathing and other relaxation techniques. Now is the time to be selfish and focus on you. Don't let others throw you off course.

Once the test is over, plan to celebrate! Go to dinner, go shopping, do something you like to celebrate the end of another re-certification year.

Good luck!