

## Testing times

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I was amused to read [Hugh Muir's account](#) of failing grade two piano in the Guardian yesterday.

When my boys were a bit younger I decided that it would encourage them to practice for their music exams if Dad set an appropriate example by taking some more clarinet exams.

As a consequence I well remember sitting with one son as we both waited for an exam, with him asking with both concern and amusement 'Why are you going to the loo so often Dad?'

And although, unlike Hugh, I did pass the couple of exams I took I found the whole process petrifying. I could face Paxman, Humphries and Neil without apparent fear, but put me in a room alone with a clarinet and a music examiner and I promise you, I rediscovered just what being nervous really meant, even though literally nothing hung on the outcome.

My sons are still taking their exams. I gave up again a while ago: I can play as well as I want and did not need to prove it, I said. Actually, I just couldn't face the stress again.