

Math Test Taking Tips

Many students do not know how to study for an exam, in particular, a math exam. Now if your teacher gives you a review, you should absolutely do it. I designed these tips to help students beyond this. Some of them are pieces of advice to mentally prepare you. Some of them are what you can do in lieu of a review or on top of a review (if you need more practice.) So let me start with the basics...

Redoing Your Homework

Doing your homework for the first time is not a way of studying for a test. Redoing problems you had trouble with when you went through the homework is the first place to start. I would even go as far as to say that redoing most of your homework is a good way of studying. Just picking a few problems from each section will help you review and will show you where you are still struggling. So it is also important to do your homework in a timely manner. Don't put it off.

Don't Focus on the Hardest Stuff

Don't get me wrong, you need to go through the hard material and try to understand it. But right before a test is not the time to do that. You should address the hard material while you are doing homework. So when you are studying before a test, be careful with focusing too much on a weak area! Sometimes, students forget the easy stuff and miss easy points on the exam, so doing a thorough review of the homework is important for remembering everything.

Work Out Some Problems

Actually work out problems before an exam, don't just look over the problems. Many students need the hands on experience in order to remember how to do a problem.

Be Preparing for the Exam While Doing Homework

It is important to be able to know how to do a problem without knowing what section the problem came from. To do this, you constantly need to be asking yourself, "How am I going to know to do this method on this problem?" Look for key words in the instructions and make sure you read the instructions for each problem in the homework so that you are familiar with the words used for each method. If all else fails, ask the teacher a question when you are taking the exam in hopes to clarify what you need to do when you are feeling confused. The worse they can say is I can't tell you that.

Go Over Your Notes

Sometimes the teacher says something will be asked on the exam and you made a note of that, but forgot that fact before the exam. Going over your notes will insure that you remember those little details. Also going over your notes will reveal what your teacher spent more time on. If your teacher covers a topic more thoroughly, then you can expect to see questions on that topic.

Try Not to Memorize

That doesn't mean formulas or vocabulary. Don't memorize the method, learn the method. Simply memorizing "On this homework problem I do this," will kill you on the final. You want to focus on understanding why you do a certain method on each problem. Even ask yourself, "What is the goal of this question?" This is a good place to get help from the teacher on identifying how to learn a method for a problem.

Review Old Quizzes

Go over any quizzes. Redo those problems separately. If the teacher thought it was important enough to quiz you on it, then it has a good chance of showing up on the test.

Make Flash Cards

If you do have to memorize formulas, this is a good way to do this. Try to make the cards as you are going along, don't save it until the end.

Get Help Early

If you find yourself struggling, go see the teacher, or get some help from a tutoring center on campus. Don't let a problem go, otherwise it will continue to be an issue all semester and may even prevent you from moving on to the next section.

Don't Stress!

If you took the time to study, you did everything you can. Try not to talk to any of the other students before the exam, they might stress you out, or even worse, they may confuse you. Take deep breaths while you're doing the exam and ask questions if something is worded funny.

Skip Around on the Test

Don't feel that you have to answer the questions in order on the test. Feel free to skip around. Answer questions you know right away and spend your energy on problems you know you can do. If you find yourself taking too long on a problem, skip it and come back. You don't want to do badly on an exam because you ran out of time. Also, you will get tired while taking an exam. If you spend your energy on problems you've struggled with and have a good chance of getting the problem wrong anyway, then you are wasting valuable energy. Doing the most difficult problems first will cause you to be tired, which means you might make careless errors on the problems you did understand and could have gotten full credit on.