

PREPARING FOR AND TAKING MATH TESTS

Special Techniques for Math Tests

1. Make sure you have the proper background for the course you have scheduled.
2. Make a conscious effort to do problems each week from every chapter that has been covered. Many students don't want to "waste their time" doing problems they feel they already know. When you do problems from week one of the term to week four, you are providing valuable reinforcement, as well as testing yourself on how well you remember the material.
3. Don't set arbitrary time limits. If it took you three hours of study per week in high school to get a C in math, don't assume the same amount of time in college will yield the same grade. Maybe you need eight hours. If eight hours isn't enough, maybe you need ten hours.
4. Use time drills. Many people do not attempt to simulate the test when studying. The result is usually practicing at a much slower pace than is required to successfully complete the test. Time yourself. If there will be 35 problems to do in 50 minutes, practice doing 35 problems in 50 minutes. A good technique for studying is exchanging problems with a friend and timing each other.
5. Take good notes. Do not underestimate the importance of good notetaking in math class. Copying down problems and examples presented on the board, step-by-step, the use of abbreviations and mathematical symbols can make notetaking easier.
6. Translate problems into English. Putting problems into words will help you understand what is asked. It may be possible to put equations and formulas into words too. The words will help you to see a variety of applications for each formula. For example: the Pythagorean Theorem, $C^2 = A^2 + B^2$, would be translated as, "The square of the hypotenuse at a right triangle is equal to the sum of the square of the other two sides."
7. Make a picture. Draw a picture or a diagram if you are stuck. Sometimes a visual representation will clear a blocked mind.
8. Estimate first. An estimation is a good way to double-check your work. When you estimate first you will notice if your computations go awry and you can correct the error quickly.