

How to Succeed in Math

The overriding tip I can give you is that mathematics requires PRACTICE!

1. Do the homework.
 - It's much better to do the homework in about two-hour time blocks. I would recommend you do the homework after each class that we have so that you stay caught up and so you are only doing small chunks (like one section) at a time.
 - Your mind actually needs processing time in between “sets” of doing homework for everything to sink in.
 - Think of it like physical exercise—it's much better to work out five days per week for one hour than once per week for five hours. ;) Brainy exercise is the same way!
2. Read the book.
 - I would highly recommend that you read through the section before I lecture on it, even if it's confusing. Just read through it once to get some idea of what's happening. Then, when I cover it in class, it will make a lot more sense. You don't need to spend a lot of time on this to soak in every detail in the book. The idea is to have an overview of what's coming.
3. Come to class.
 - This sounds obvious to some people. There is really no substitute for attending class and picking up the extra bits of information that you'll get from the lectures. It's likely I'll give you additional strategies that are not found in the book. Also, repetition is key for learning mathematics, so if you come to class, it helps embed the lessons in your head.
4. Be courageous!
 - This is by far the most important success tip I can give you. Math requires courage and persistence. Don't allow yourself to create some negative story about you if you can't get some problems finished. Just pick up the pieces, try again, look back through your notes or examples in the book to see if that can help you. Go to the tutoring lab and get help from the tutors. Form a study group and get help from your peers. Ask questions in class. Trust me, if you have a question, many other students are wondering about the same thing.

Tips for taking Math Exams

1. Keep up with the homework throughout the semester. This is truly the biggest success tip for the exams. Cramming the night before an exam is analogous to running 25 miles the day before you actually run a marathon. You'll just be exhausted for the actual event and not do as well as you could have done! Most of the "training" for a math exam is done in the weeks prior to the exam, with the homework.
2. Do the exam review problems within three days preceding the exam to refresh your skills.
3. Get a good night's sleep before an exam to make sure you are well-rested and ready to think.
4. When you get the exam, skim through the entire test FIRST.
 - Do the problems that seem easiest to you. This makes sure you get those points on your exam score, and it also boosts your emotional feelings about the test.
 - Then go through and do the medium-level problems.
 - Save the hardest problems for the end.
 - Know yourself! In other words, if you tend to second-guess yourself and change correct answers to incorrect answers, then don't look at the problems after you've finished. On the other hand, if you tend to have mental aha moments after you've struggled a bit, then go back through the exam a second or third time to make sure you sufficiently checked your work.