

Test Taking Strategies

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Students will often say "I get the material when I'm doing it on the homework, but I'm bad at test-taking." While some people truly have test-taking issues, I don't believe that is usually the problem. There are many ways to improve your achievement in math class with tests and quizzes. Here is my advice:

- 1) Do your homework. Do it carefully, and make a note for yourself when you don't know how to do a problem. When possible check your answers as you go along (odd answers are usually in the back of the book.)
- 2) In class, check your other answers with my overhead. When you miss a problem, mark it clearly, and then ask for help if you can't figure out by yourself what happened. Ask questions on the problems that stumped you at home.
- 3) Come to class. The people that do the worst in math are the people that miss the most classes.
- 4) When you miss a class, come by the next day you return to school (or even later that day if you only missed part of the school day) to find out what you missed and see if there are any hand-outs.
- 5) Get extra help if you feel weak on a topic: If you know you are not strong with a topic, come to tutorial to get extra help. If you can't come during Tutorial, ask me if there is another time when you can get help.
- 6) Consider getting help from another source: If you would feel more comfortable getting help from someone who is not your teacher, look into getting a tutor. Ask me for a list of tutors (students and/or community members) who have offered to tutor for pay.
- 7) If you get a tutor, use the tutor's help wisely. Start your homework before you meet with the tutor. Do as much as you can ahead of time, and make a list of questions. Then, when you meet with the tutor you have something to talk about. In the end you will do much better if you try all the problems on the homework and come with a list of things you need help with than if you don't even crack the book unless the tutor is there.
- 8) Don't be afraid to look at the book. Many students don't even try to look to the book for help. The book often has clear, worked-out examples for the main types of problems assigned. It is often hard to learn from a dry textbook, but you should try it if you are struggling.

9) Ask to sit near the front. If you are easily distracted, sitting in the front is a great way to pay better attention. I can't put everyone in the front, but I can usually accommodate requests to change seats.

10) Work hard when you are in class. Put your cell phone and music players away. Try to focus on getting classwork done in class. The more you can do when you are in class and able to ask questions quickly the better.

11) Be especially sure to do the few assignments just before a test or quiz. Usually I make the last two assignments cover everything that we'll have on the test. To skip one of these assignments or to do it half-way or incomplete is leaving yourself open to being surprised on the test. If you are surprised by a problem on a test or quiz in my class, then you have not been paying attention. I never throw things at you that you haven't seen or worked with before on classwork or homework.

12) Study for tests and quizzes: in addition to doing the homework, ask yourself which topics you are not confident in. Do extra practice on these. Where do you get the practice? You can easily re-do problems from an old homework or classwork assignment to see if you get the right answers again. Open a notebook or get a stack of blank paper and re-do problems until you feel comfortable and confident, or until your questions are clear. Do some problems from each section from the book. Go to the section, pick some odd problems, do them, and then check your answers. If you don't get them right, review your notes, the examples in the book, and your already corrected homeworks. Your homeworks should be full of completed and corrected problems. Use them as a resource.

13) Take a practice test: Use the book to find problems of each type and take a practice test. Treat it like a real test (i.e. do it without music, without getting help, and without using the book or your notes.) Make sure to choose problems that you can check your answers on (old homeworks, odd problems in the book, etc.) Consider taking the practice quizzes for each section offered by our textbook publisher (<http://www.classzone.com/>). Correct your self-test, and then get help on any remaining areas where you feel weak.

You don't have to do all of these things at once.

If you want help with any of this, come talk with me. Happy studying!

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