

Test-Savvy Study Techniques for Math

Preparation:

- Frequently make up self-quizzes and take them like they are tests.
- Prepare to test yourself one week before the actual test, at least for what has been covered to that point. If you have a review, photocopy it and take it like a test (no answers, no notes) then extra-study what you missed. Or make your own.
- As you do your homework, create your own practice test by copying some problems on flashcards (solution on the back). Shuffle them & test yourself.
- Find practice items from other sources (online sites/old tests/old books)
- Work problems on our classroom boards – calculator only. This should create some anxiety and you can practice how to handle it.
- Create a “mock memory card,” even though you can’t use it – half the benefit is deciding what to put on it and making it.
- Stop studying at least 30 minutes before the exam. Go to/near the exam site (if that’s DSPS, make sure the test is there). Work on relaxation techniques, review your mock memory card, and b-r-e-a-t-h-e.

Motivation:

- Are you aiming for success or avoiding failure? Avoiding failure isn’t bad, but it frames your thinking a bit differently than success does. Your attitude will affect what ideas come to mind on how to solve difficult problems.
- If you are generally an optimistic person but don’t feel confident, fake it; the dissonance affects brain processes positively.
- Get out of your own way! Reframe any negative thoughts to allow your common sense to guide your reasoning.
- Plan something enjoyable after a test as a reward for doing your best.

Concentration:

- Slow Down!! Anxiety can speed us up. Breathe and consciously slow down.
- Do a “brain dump.” Write down formulas, etc you want to remember.
- Read the instructions! – obvious, but rarely done. Not only can it give you ideas as to what to do, it can save you time or get you extra credit points!
- Look at the problem. Really look at it. Say each number/letter/symbol out loud (quietly). You’ll slow down and pay better attention to detail.
- Do something for at least partial credit. What to try?
 - ✓ Simplify. PEMDAS can make ugly problems look easier.
 - ✓ Factor. A good GCF (number/variable) can simplify a problem.
 - ✓ Is there an = with math on both sides? Move stuff!
 - ✓ Word problems – Draw a picture, or start a chart with what you know
- Don’t stay stuck. If you’re unsure or don’t like an answer, circle the problem number and move on. Write something relevant at each problem and your mind will keep working on it.
- If you have time left, use it to cover the answer to a problem and re-work it, or to check your answers (plug the number back in to the problem). If you get a different answer, it changes your focus for finding a mistake.