

Would you rather go to a dental appointment than attend a math class?

If you answered “yes,” then you could be suffering from math anxiety, a barrier to learning that you have probably learned over time. However, anything that is learned can be unlearned.

Here are some suggestions for reducing your math anxiety.

Taking a Math Class

Prior to Class

- A major cause of math anxiety is being under prepared. Since math builds one skill upon another, it is vital to be enrolled in a course that is compatible with your abilities.
- Preview relevant text sections, so you have some familiarity with concepts.
- Find out what resources are available in case you encounter difficulties. Your instructor, the tutors in the **Academic Resource Centre** and classmates can provide invaluable support.

During Class

- Find a balance between copying everything the instructor writes on the board & trying to understand the concepts. Record 1 or 2 key examples & a text reference page number.
- Stay focused. When frustrated or confused, you may lose concentration. Pay close attention even when you don't understand. You can work on solving the issue after class.
- Don't be shy: ask questions when you feel lost. Volunteer to work out problems on the board.

After Class

- Review text material. Work through examples with paper & pencil until you understand.
- Do & correct the margin exercises.
- Do the assigned homework, & then do some extra questions. Practice! Practice! Practice!
- Take questions one at a time. If completely stuck on a question, skip it, & come back to it later. If you still can't get it on your second try, mark the item & ask someone for help.
- Develop a strategy for solving word problems. Try this one:
 - Read the problem until you understand what is being asked.
 - Draw a picture to visualize the problem.
 - Identify what has been given & what you are looking for.
 - Assign the unknown a letter (or variable).
 - Write an equation using the variable. Then, solve the equation.
 - Check your answer. Is it reasonable & accurate? State your answer clearly with units.
- If you don't understand a concept, seek help immediately. Avoiding your problem areas will not help you understand them better!
- Access **quality**, online resources such as Khan Academy and recommended YouTube videos.

Getting Ready for a Math Test

- **Think Positively.** Sometimes when working on weaker skills, it is easy to become negative. Challenge yourself to stay focused & tackle difficulties one at a time. Visualize your success!
- **Don't cram.** Study a little every day. Frequent review will increase your confidence & mastery of a concept. Daily practice also identifies areas which require extra work.

Use various study strategies

- Make flash cards for key vocabulary, concepts, or problems.
- Thoroughly complete textbook chapter reviews & tests.
- Form a study group & meet regularly.
- Write your own test using sample questions from your notes & text. Select 1 or 2 questions from each section & create a separate answer key. Take the practice test under test-like conditions (timed, no notes, quiet). After, mark the test & rework questions you missed.

Prepare a test kit: sharp pencils, erasers, tissues, bottled water, calculator, times table, ...

Take care of yourself

- Take study breaks to refresh yourself.
- Get a good night's sleep, especially the night before the exam.
- Eat well and stay hydrated, it matters!

Taking a Math Test

- **Think positively & relax.** Panic is a common response. Remind yourself that you are ready for the test; you can do this! Breathe slowly in through your nose & out through your mouth.
- **Do a data dump.** When you get the test, jot down formulas & facts you need to remember.
- **Read & follow the directions carefully.** Underline key information before answering questions.
- **Skim the test & plan your attack.** Do easier questions first. Save the hardest ones for last.
- **Work carefully, neatly, & systematically.** Errors commonly occur when students rush, take shortcuts, or scribble quick responses. Don't rush, but also be aware of the time, & don't dwell too long on one question.
- **Ask the instructor questions if needed.** At worst, the instructor will say, "I can't answer that question." At best, the instructor will help you over a hurdle.

Dealing with the Aftermath

- **Let the results go.** You have used a lot of energy & may be low or off balance. Refresh yourself by taking some time for yourself.
- **When you get your test results back, stay calm.** Do not compare your results with anyone. It is not a competition. You have no control over the results of others.
- **Listen as the instructor reviews the exam.** Watch for areas of strength & weakness. Learn from your mistakes. Make note of concepts requiring further review.
- **Keep the test (if you can) & use it to improve.** Review the test & learn the material you missed. Use it to prepare for other exams, such as midterms & finals.

BE RESOURCEFUL IF YOU NEED HELP!

Need Help? Contact your academic strategist for support!!

Justine Boughen ▪ Academic Strategist ▪ jboughen@mhc.ab.ca ▪ 403-504-2247