

FIVE STEPS TO BETTER MATH GRADES

This may go against common logic, but the number of hours that you study the night before the test may not have very much effect on your grade. Feeling as if you understand the material when it is explained in class may not have a lot of influence on how you do on the tests. **The main thing that will have a positive impact on your performance in a math class is the amount of time you spend doing problem sets after class, and in preparation for the next class.** If you want to break the cycle of poor math grades, you must do it from the start, by preparing for each math topic even BEFORE it is presented in class.

FIRST: Look over the upcoming section in your math book. See if any of the problems shown look at all familiar to you. Notice vocabulary, and consider whether these are words with which you are familiar. Think of a few questions that you might want to ask in class. This would be even better: read over the chapter with a pencil in your hand, and jot down some familiar vocabulary, unfamiliar vocabulary, and questions.

SECOND: Work hard to follow explanations as your teacher lectures the class. When you take notes, leave of extra space to add steps and explanations. Ask questions if you have been trying to follow, but are confused or missing a step. HOWEVER, if you do allow yourself to space out for a while (it happens to all of us), do not expect the teacher to go backwards to catch you up – just continue to take notes, and try to get back on track.

THIRD: Go over your notes as soon as possible after class. Fix illegible writing while the lecture is still fresh in your memory. Highlight vocabulary, read over the steps taken to solve problems, and make a note if there is a step you do not understand. Highlight assignments, test dates, and other important information announced by your professor. MAKE YOUR NOTES INTO A STUDY GUIDE!!!!

FOURTH: Work on assigned homework problems. Start working on the problems while you are going over your notes, or soon afterwards. Don't give yourself the time to forget the concepts and procedures you just learned. If no problems are assigned, go to the end of the chapter that covers the lecture. Choose problems that look similar to the ones demonstrated by your professor. Check your answers in the back of the book if possible. If you are unable to do the homework problems, locate within your notes an example completed by your professor. Write it down on a sheet of paper, and try to do it on your own without looking at your notes. Do the same thing with problems solved within the chapter. Then go back and try the homework problems again. This fourth step can take many forms. Doing homework with other students in your class can be extremely helpful. Dividing the time up into several 15 segments might make it easier for you to motivate yourself. Set a timer for 15 minutes, and give yourself permission to be done that session no matter how much you accomplished. (Of course make sure that you have scheduled several more 15 minutes sessions for yourself.) If doing the problems on your own or with classmates is not working, go to the Learning and Advising Center (215-951-2799) for help. There are peer tutors there, and during their hours you just have to drop in to see them. There are also professional math tutors with whom you can make an appointment. Weekly review sessions occur for some math classes. Ask about them at the Learning & Advising Center.

FIFTH: Study for the test by working on homework problems and/or test practice handouts distributed by your professor. Reading over the book and looking over your notes are NOT effective ways to study for a math test. The only effective way to study for a math test is to practice working out problems. It is best to mix up problems from all of the chapters, explain to yourself how to tell which kind of problem calls for what specific kind of action, and solve the problems.