

Studying Effectively for Math Tests – Math 9

High school math is more demanding and challenging than middle school math. Students must do their math assignments daily and must start to study effectively to be prepared for tests.

Just how do you study for a math test? Many students have minimal experience studying for math until high school. Then, during high school, one has to learn very quickly some effective study techniques.

The Study Plans that you must AVOID!!

- 1) Not studying at all!
- 2) Read over my notes and it all seems familiar, so I'm ready for my test. OR
- 3) Read over my notes and try a few questions from the practice test, so I'm ready for my test.

Why don't these work?

On a test you have to DO math, not read math. Also, during a test, you have a question in front of you, but no hint on how to get it started, and you can't peek at your notes to help you through.

Studying by simply reading your notes is called the 'familiarity' problem. You look over your notes and recognize everything, so you feel prepared. You start to write your test and realize you are having trouble doing the questions. You may have been familiar with the math when looking over your notes, but can you APPLY the math to questions that are placed in front of you with no hints or references, just a blank page to get the answer?

What does work? Here are some great study ideas!

Studying needs to be ORGANIZED.

- 1) Make a study plan with actual days and times. Pencil in what you will study in each time slot. For a chapter test, you should study for two to three days with NO CRAMMING.
- 2) Make sure all of your notes are complete and organized.
- 3) Finish any and all of your daily assignments to get enough practice in for each concept learned in the chapter.
- 4) Go back to the first section in your notes, cover the examples, and do them over. If you struggle with one or more of them, find a similar question in that assignment and try one or two more until you're confident about how to approach and do that type of question. Do this for each section.
- 5) When you have finished covering and retrying the notes, make a 'CHEAT SHEET', a sheet that would be useful to you if you could take it into your test (you can't though ☹). Go through each section and write down all the important points (try to do it without looking at the notes), and supplement with examples. Making up the example is valuable because it helps you to realize what each type of question you could see on your test will look like. Doing the example is obviously helpful as that's what you'll be doing to be successful on the real test. You'll be surprised at how good an exercise this is to solidify your learning. You'll know everything on your cheat sheet and wouldn't even need it anyway!
- 6) Do your practice test 'closed book' (an simulated test situation) after making your 'cheat sheet'. Pay attention to the instructions of the questions to get used to the vocabulary

(it will be similar vocabulary on the test questions). Try to recognize what section it is from to give it a context. Check the answer on the webpage to see if you did it correctly. If so, great! If not, then go through it closely, possibly with the applicable notes available, and try to figure out your mistake(s) so you avoid them the day of the test. Then try to find another question like that one so you can try again (probably from the applicable assignment or the chapter review in the textbook).

The six steps above are a good guide on how to study for math. Students may not do exactly what is suggested above, but it should be similar. What components are essential to doing well?

What does your studying need?

- A) An organizational system that ensures you've studied THOROUGHLY, ie did you address everything that could possibly be on the test.
- B) You need to DO math to study, not simply READ or look over the math.
- C) Your studying should definitely include a test simulation...a practice test that complete the evening before to see if you're really prepared.
- D) Extra work on concepts/questions that are troublesome.
- E) More than one day. Cramming does not work for most people, as all the math runs together in your brain. If you find you need extra help, you have the time to get it.

Another Helpful Tip

Listen closely to what your teachers says leading up to a chapter test. There are usually one or more hints about what will be on the test. Write these down and pay attention to them while studying.

What are your goals?

Math 9 is a huge building block to future success in high school math. So the more you know from math 9, the more success you can have in math 10, 11, and 12. Don't sell yourself short! Aim high with your goals in math and if you are responsible about doing your math each day, and studying effectively for tests (this will take some practice and reflection), you may be surprised at how well you can learn the concepts. If you're going to do something, then do it right, and prove to yourself how well you can do when you put your mind to something.