

Study Skills Tips: Math Anxiety

Most people feel that math is a four-letter word. It is a subject that causes a great deal of anxiety for people and is often treated as though what is required is impossible to do. Below you will find some myths, and truths about math, how anxiety affects you and some helpful tricks that will allow you to shine in any math related class.

Myths About Math

- You don't need math unless you are interested in a scientific or technical career.
- People who do well in math have mathematical minds, and usually, these people are male.
- If a person falls behind, or if it has been a significant time since studying math, it's hopeless to try to learn it now.

Truths About Math

- All careers use math.
- Everyone is capable of learning math.
- It is never too late to learn.

Factors of Math Anxiety

- Cognitive Interference - any thinking that interferes with what we are supposed to be doing. Beware of distractions and put them out of your mind.
- Negative Self Talk - this is a type of cognitive interference, these are the "I can't" ideas; "this is too hard for me," etc. These types of fears can cause our bodies to release the hormone Epinephrine as a reaction to the anxiety that we feel. This is what makes us jittery and sick to our stomachs when we are anxious.

Ways to Overcome Anxiety

- Acknowledge your feelings, admit your anxiousness.
- Stop yourself from thinking irrelevant thoughts or putting yourself down.
- Focus your attention toward the task at hand.
- Remember if you do not take risks, you are not growing.
- Exercise.
- Avoid caffeine - coffee, tea and chocolate are stimulants and can make you even more nervous than you already are.
- Breathe deeply and face your anxiety.
- Maintain a positive attitude.

Now that you have overcome your anxiety you need to learn some hints so you can be successful in math. Below you will find MSB's tips to be successful in math.

How to Succeed in Math

- Make sure that you are in a class that is "right" for you.
- Come to class on time and bring a pencil, textbook, and notebook.
- Do not let the appearance of math problems intimidate you.
- Ask questions in class.
- Take your math class at a time that you know you will be alert.
- Don't overload your class schedule.
- Pay special attention to formulas and theorems and understand them.
- Pay attention to the written instructions for each problem.
- Practice problems over and over again.
- Do not place too much emphasis on the correct answer, focus more on the process used.
- **SHOW YOUR WORK** on every test, you may receive partial credit.
- Get help from others, instructors, tutors, friends, etc.
- Don't ever give up.

How to Succeed in Math; During the Test

- Carefully read the instructions.
- Go to a problem that is familiar to you.
- Don't let your feelings about a prior problem interfere with your performance on the current one.
- Watch out for careless errors.
- Watch out for negative self-talk and anxiety.

How to Keep Succeeding in Math; After the Test

- Congratulate yourself on having worked hard.
- When you get your test back, understand your mistakes and use them as an opportunity to learn.
- Remember trying hard is as important as succeeding.

Remember: practice makes perfect, these types of habits can be used to your advantage in all courses, not just those involving math. It is important to have a schedule that you follow consistently in order to keep your busy schedule under control. Good luck and have fun.