

HOW TO INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF SUCCESS IN A MATHEMATICS CLASS

- Remember that you are responsible for your own learning. The time to worry about the hole you are in is at the beginning of the semester, when there is still time to avoid the hole altogether.
- Come to class. Always.
- During class, pay attention to the instructor. Take notes. If you have a question, ask your **instructor**, not a classmate. If you ask a classmate, you are (a) disrupting the class, and (b) keeping the classmate from hearing the instructor, thereby hurting your classmate's chances of success.
- **Do not** visit with classmates during class. This behavior is disrespectful toward both the instructor and your fellow classmates. If you find yourself being distracted during class, pick a different seat for the next lecture. If necessary, ask the instructor for help with this.
- Read through (or even better, WORK through) your lecture notes and the text material over what was covered.
- Do the homework. All of it.
- Keep up with the homework. Often, a thorough understanding of tomorrow's lecture depends on understanding yesterday's homework. The most successful math students do at least a little bit of homework each day to stay fresh and on top of the material.
- If you have trouble with homework, make note of which problems, AND what seemed to be the difficulty. Have those questions ready to ask the instructor WHEN CLASS BEGINS.
- At the beginning of the class period, ask questions about homework difficulties. If you still do not understand the material, get help from the instructor (or someone else), and **keep** getting help until you DO understand. Do this **AS SOON AS YOU CAN**. The longer you wait, the more work it will take for you to understand the material.
- Take advantage of the instructor's office hours and/or appointment times. Bring specific questions whenever possible. Bring your homework so that the instructor can help you identify where you are making errors.
- As soon as 2 to 3 sections have been covered, take some study time each day to review a bit of previous material.

- **At least** a week before an exam, start **mixing up** problems from all sections covered and work them without notes or help. If you get certain problems memorized, pick different ones the next time. Keep adding problems as you learn new material.
- It is **ESSENTIAL** to **mix up** problems as you prepare for the exam, so that you do not become dependent on knowing the section number to determine what kind of problem you are working, and how to get started. Physically making “**flash cards**” to mix up problems has been very helpful for many students. [Tip: use a photocopier in “reduce” mode to copy lecture examples and homework questions.]
- Try to work in a “timed” situation as you study for an exam. Do your best to work efficiently and quickly. By putting yourself under this constraint at home, you are better preparing yourself for a time limit on the exam, and are less likely to get nervous. See if you can work a certain type of problem more quickly today than you did yesterday.
- Make sure that you have memorized any required formulas.
- **DO** get ample **sleep** before the exam. Eat and/or drink something. Dress comfortably. All of these will improve your ability to make good judgments.
- When an exam is returned, work through the problems as well as you can; the mistakes **you** discover will make more sense to you, and you are more likely to remember them. Then, arrange to see the instructor to discuss any material that you still do not understand.
- Take some time once a week to work through a few problems from an old exam or quiz. As you get these problems memorized, pick similar problems from lecture examples or homework. When Final Exam time comes, you will just have to brush up in a few areas and do a brief general review.