

PREPARING FOR TESTS

The best test-taking strategy is to prepare for math tests by developing good study habits and by planning strategies for attempting problems that you may not know how to solve.

Before the exam:

- Take and master "practice tests" that have the same form as the actual tests you are preparing to take. Create sample tests for yourself if they are not provided by the instructor. Test yourself often.
- Develop good note-taking skills so that assignments, class notes, and homework become valuable study tools for exams.
- Do class work every day.
- Try to understand the assignments before leaving class. Ask questions during class or see the instructor later.
- Complete and turn in homework.

During the exam:

- Read all directions carefully. Determine what the question is asking.

- Follow directions. Show your work.
- Work through the problems like you did on the practice test and homework.
- Don't spend too much time on any question. Return to difficult problems as time permits. Other questions on the exam may provide hints.
- Don't make uneducated guesses. Try to solve problems by reasoning and eliminating wrong answers.
- Don't expect to find a pattern in the positions of the correct answers.
- Only change an answer if you are sure the one picked is wrong.
- After completion of the test, use any remaining time to check your answers.

Additional strategies that can be applied to high-stakes tests should be learned and practiced well in advance of the test. They should never become the only approach for taking an exam. More details are found under math resources on the website www.rpdp.net.



Math Resources

www.rpdp.net

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"... prepare by developing good study habits..."



Test-Taking Strategies

STRATEGY 1: Process of Elimination

Test writers often construct their incorrect answers not to be reasonable, but to anticipate common errors that are made by students in a hurry. Watch out for multiple step problems!

STRATEGY 2: Measure It

When you are at a loss about how to do a geometry calculation, especially when you see diagrams, make a measure (physical or mental) and compare it against the answers given.

STRATEGY 3: Backsolve

Try each answer (substitute) to see which one works. Start from one of the middle choices and work out (that way if you are wrong, you can tell whether to go up or down). In other words, work backwards.

STRATEGY 4: Plug-In Numbers at Random

Make an attempt at trial solutions by assigning an arbitrary value to each unknown. It is usually advisable not to use 0, 1 or 2 as they often produce unique situations.

STRATEGY 5: Plug-In/Plot-It

When you are unsure how a graph would appear after looking at the equation or the description of an activity you are to convert to a graph, make an attempt by assigning your own values for points and plotting them.

STRATEGY 6: The Wild Guess—Tame It!

Some test-takers develop their own method of guessing including the following: answering "c" for everything; answering "a", "b", "c", "d" repeatedly; or answering *eeny, meeny, miny, mo*. These types of systems are not advisable. Develop your own guessing methods based on good test-taking strategies.

