

Complete a Test Preparation Checklist

It takes more than simply learning the material to prepare for a test. You also need a strategy that will help you understand what it is you are studying for. To do that, learn as much as you can about what the test will be like. The more you understand about the kind of test and what it will cover, the better you'll be able to target your studying.

To focus your studying, complete the following test preparation checklist before your next test.

TEST PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- I know whether it's a quiz, test, or exam.
- I know what kinds of questions will be on the test.
- I understand what material will be covered.
- I know how many questions will be on the test.
- I know how long I will have to complete the test.
- I know how it will be graded and how the grade contributes to my final course grade.
- I obtained sample questions and/or previous tests, if available.
- I formed or participated in a study group.
- I used different and appropriate preparation strategies for different types of questions.
- I read and studied my class notes.
- I composed some questions of the kind that will be on the exam.
- I answered essay questions aloud.
- I actively memorized facts and details.
- I made and used index cards.
- I created and used a test like the real test.

After completing the checklist, ask yourself these questions: How can I use this checklist to study more effectively for tests? How might completing the checklist change the way I previously have studied for tests? What new strategies might I follow in order to prepare for tests more effectively in the future?

Complete a Test Preparation Checklist

Special Techniques for Dealing with Math Anxiety

For many students, the greatest test anxiety comes when there're taking a math test. Math seems to bring out the worst fears in some people, perhaps because it's seen as a discipline in which answers are either totally right or totally wrong, or because they've felt they've "hit the wall" and they'll never be able to understand a concept, no matter how hard they try.

Such feelings about math can be devastating, because they can prevent you from doing well even if you know the material. If you suffer from math anxiety, keep these things in mind:

- Math is like any other subject: The greatest component of success is the effort you put in, not whether you have a "math gene" that makes you naturally good at math. It's not true that you either are born "good at math" or not and that there's some secret about math that some people know and others don't.
- It's also not true that there's only one way to solve a math problem. Sometimes there are a variety of routes to coming up with a solution. And keep in mind that the solution to math problems often calls for creativity, not just sheer logic.
- It's a false stereotype that women are not as good at math as men, but it's a stereotype that many women buy into. Research has shown that when men do badly on a math test, they're most likely to think that they haven't put in enough effort. But when women don't do well on a math test, they're three times more likely than men to feel that they don't have enough ability to be successful. That's an erroneous view of the world. Don't become a prisoner of stereotypes.
- Remember that math has practical uses. Some people are afraid of math because they view it as theoretical, with no practical value. But if you want to figure out the size of a room, how to calculate a tip in a restaurant, or how much interest you'll pay on a loan, you'll need to make use of geometry, arithmetic, and algebra.
- Finally, use these special strategies to deal with math problems on exams:

Before Tests

1. Math is cumulative, building on prior concepts and knowledge. Make sure you review math fundamentals before moving on to more advanced topic.

Complete a Test Preparation Checklist

2. Ask question in class. Don't be afraid that you'll ask the wrong question in the wrong way. Math instructors love their subject, and they want others to understand it.
3. Make use of review sessions and other study resources.
4. Practice, practice, practice. The more experience you have completing math problems under pressure, the better you'll do. Practice math problems using a timer in order to simulate an actual test.
5. Get rid of negative self-talk ("I'm a born math loser" or "This stuff is so hard I'm bound to fail") by identifying such negative thoughts and understanding the lack of logic behind them. Try to replace them with more positive thoughts ("I learned the basics of math, and this new material is just a logical extension of the fundamentals" and "if I'm confident and proceed methodically, I can succeed").

During the Test

1. Analyze math problems carefully. What are the known quantities or constants, and what pieces of information are missing? What formula(s) or theorem(s) apply?
2. For word problems, consider if they are similar to word problems that you've studied and mastered.
3. Consider drawing a diagram, graph, or probability tree.
4. Break down calculations into their component parts.
5. Check your math carefully.
6. Be neat and logical in your presentation, and show every step as you solve problems. Your instructor may give you partial credit if you lay out every step you're going through. In addition, some instructors require you to show your work.