

# Succeeding in Math Class

Here are some suggestions I have for those who want to improve their chances of success in math class. Many of the suggestions should also be useful in other classes.

## 1 Be consistent

Mathematics is a difficult subject—one that is nearly impossible to learn in large chunks. Don't try. Learn it in small, manageable pieces by coming to *every* class and doing *every* homework assignment. I call this the heroism of just showing up. The value of consistent performance might be the most important thing you learn in this class.

In most cases the math you learn today uses the math you learned yesterday. This fact makes it even more important to come every day. Once you become lost, it is very difficult to get back on track.

## 2 Doing homework

Think of doing homework as if it is basketball practice. This is your chance to practice your skills without the pressure of the big game (i.e. the exam). It's alright to make mistakes. You're practicing.

Near the end of the assignment, you should do some of the problems all by yourself, without looking at the book, notes, or other problems. You are simulating game (exam) conditions, finding out if you've learned the skills well enough. If you work with someone else on the homework, save a few of the problems to do on your own later.

If you can't do some of the problems, *get help right away*. I leave at least one day in between the day the assignment is made and the day it is due. That will give you time to get help. Note that you will not know you need help if you don't try the assignment. So, it's very important that you try the assignment the day it is assigned.

## 3 Studying for an exam

The key to studying for an exam is to simulate the exam. Make a list of problems by choosing a few of the harder problems from each homework set. Write down all those problems, and on a separate sheet of paper, try to do each problem without looking in the book, notes, etc. Maybe you can only do one or two of them.

For all those problems you could not do, somehow (book, notes, other help) write a correct solution. Now throw all your solutions in the garbage, and try again to do each problem on your list without any help. Repeat this until you can do them all without help.

You may want to update your exam study list as you do each homework set. Then, when the exam comes around, you'll have your study list already created.

## Homework Scores

Homework number	Score out of 50	Tough/representative problems
0		
1		
2		
3		
4		
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