

PROFESSOR SIKORA
MAT0024C – Beginning Algebra

SUCCESS IN STUDYING MATH

1. **Do the homework** – on time every day it is due (see orange Assignment sheet or copy from Prof. Sikora’s website)
2. **Ask questions.**
3. **Take advantage of help.**
 - a. Comp House (back of Math Center 7-240) for immediate help with a Professor and/or follow Comp House link in Prof. Sikora’s website for helpful worksheets
 - b. Math Lab (right side of math Center 7-240) – do labs on or before Wed due date for 3 bonus points added to lab grade
 - c. Math Help Sessions – with SL Leader and at announced help sessions prior to and specifically to prepare for the Competency Test
 - d. Working with other students from our the class when needed, on a regular basis and/or prior to each Chapter Test
 - e. VCC Tutors (left side of Math Center 7-240)
 - f. Private tutor
4. Take advantage of opportunities that instructor gives for **extra credit**. (See Prof. Sikora’s website)
5. **Be an active, not a passive, learner.**
 - a. Take responsibility for studying, recognizing what you do and don’t know, and knowing how to get your Prof. Sikora to help you with what you don’t know by asking relevant questions before, during and/or after class.
 - b. Attend class every day and take complete notes. Prof. Sikora formulates test questions based on material and examples covered in class as well as on examples and homework questions from the text.
 - c. Be an active participant in the classroom. Get ahead in the book; try to work some of the problems before they are covered in class. Anticipate what the Prof. Sikora’s next step will be.
 - d. Ask questions in class! There are usually other students wanting to know the answers to the same questions you have.
 - e. Good study habits throughout the semester make it easier to study for tests.

Studying Math is Different from Studying Other Subjects

- Math is learned by **doing** problems. Do the homework. The problems help you learn the formulas and techniques you do need to know, as well as improve your problem-solving prowess.
- A word of warning: Each class builds on the previous ones, all semester long. You must keep up with Prof. Sikora, attend class, read the text and do homework every day. Falling a day behind puts you at a disadvantage. Falling a week behind puts you in deep trouble.
- A word of encouragement: Each class builds on the previous ones, all semester long. You're always reviewing previous material as you do new material. Many of the ideas hang together. Identifying and learning the key concepts means you don't have to memorize as much.

College Math is Different from High School Math

A college math class meets less often and covers material at about twice the pace that a high school course does. You are expected to absorb new material much more quickly.

- Take responsibility for keeping up with the homework. Make sure **you** find out how to do it.
- You probably need to spend **more** time studying per week – you do more of the learning **outside** of class than in high school.
- Tests may seem harder just because they cover more material.

Study Time

You may know a rule of thumb about math (and other) classes: at least 2 hours of study time per class hour. But this may not be enough!

- Take as much time as you need to do all the homework and get complete understanding of the material.
- **Form a study group.** Meet once or twice a week (also use the phone). Go over problems you've had trouble with. Either someone else in the group will help you or you will discover you're all stuck on the same problems. Then it's time to get help from your instructor.

The more challenging the material, the more time you should spend on it.

TEST ANXIETY: KEEPING CALM

1. **Prepare well in advance.** Keep up day to day, if you can, but don't judge yourself harshly if you don't. Avoid last-minute cramming. Don't go without sleep the night before (though four or five hours may be enough). Stop studying an hour or so before the test and relax and compose yourself.
2. **Know the time and place of the test and what you need to bring.** Be on time, neither too early nor too late, with books or supplies. Don't rush.
3. **Don't talk about the test** with classmates immediately beforehand if you know it raises your anxiety level. To do so may nourish group paranoia.
4. **Read over the test and plan your approach.** Ascertain point values per part, time limits for each section, which questions you'll start with, etc.
5. **Don't hesitate to ask for clarification** from the professor, teaching assistant, or proctor if you have questions about directions, procedure, etc., rather than letting anxiety build up because you aren't sure what you are expected to do.
6. **Develop an aggressive, yet realistic attitude.** Approach the test vigorously determined that you will do your best, but also accept the limits of what you know at the moment. Use everything you know to do well, but don't blame yourself for what you don't know.
7. **Activity reduces anxiety.** If you go blank and can't think of anything to write, go on to another question or another part of the test. On an essay, jot down anything you can recall on scratch paper to stimulate your memory and get your mind working.
8. **Relax yourself physically** during the test if you notice that you are not thinking well or are tight. Pause, lay your test aside, and take several slow, deep breaths. Concentrate on your breathing. Do this if you notice that you are worrying excessively about one problem, not reading carefully, forgetting information you know, etc.
9. **Pay attention to the test,** not to yourself or others. Don't waste time worrying, doubting yourself, wondering how other people are doing, blaming yourself, etc. Don't worry about what you should have done; pay attention to what you can do now.
10. **Speak with a counselor,** if you continue having test anxiety after applying the suggestions above.