Test-taking and studying strategies for success in a college math class.

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Here are some pointers on test taking and studying strategies that I have found, over the years to be helpful to many students at every level between high school and graduate school. This does not mean that these are the ONLY effective strategies, but they are a good starting point.

**Test-taking:**

1. Start by reading the whole test first. If the wording to problem confuses you, raise your hand and ask a clarification question!

2. Do your favorite problem first (favorite usually means the one you feel the most comfortable with or prepared for). Then do your second-favorite, and so on.

3. If you get stuck on a problem, skip it and come back to it later!

4. Pay attention to how many points are assigned to a problem to use your time wisely. Don’t spend too much time on that problem if it’s not worth enough points.

For example, your exam will be out of 100 points. If a problem is worth 10 points, and you have 50 minutes for the exam, then if you find you’re spending more than 5 minutes on it, that’s probably a good time to let it go and come back to it later.

5. Be sure you no only understand how to do a type of problem, but that you have practiced doing similar problems enough to ensure you can do them at “test-taking speed”: meaning that you should be able to 1. Immediately recall how to do the problem and 2. Be comfortable writing out any algebraic computations necessary very quickly.

**Studying:**

1. Don’t focus too much on what your numerical grade is in the class before the exam. This is not a useful gauge of how to study for a particular exam.

   This is because your numerical grade only gives you an idea of "how much" to study, and since we all have limited time, "how much" is less important than "what to study". Study as much as you can, but to succeed you must prioritize.

2. So, then, what IS a useful gauge of how to study? Looking at which concepts on the study guide you do not understand, which worksheet, quiz, and homework
problems, and suggested practice problems from the Lecture announcements you had trouble with, and which lecture notes you did not understand should be your starting points.

Resolves these issues first, even if you are happy with your course average. The one question you didn’t get on a Quiz could be similar to an Exam problem that turns out to be worth a full drop in a letter grade on the Exam.

3. Use the existing course resources for extra practice. There are reviews and extra practice problems at the end of every chapter in your textbook, and of course there are more problems we did not assign in the sections we’ve covered.

Remember: All the odd book problems have answers in the back of the book, and many have solution videos in the e-book version.

4. If you feel very comfortable with your numerical grade, and you have not encountered issues with any assignments, quizzes, or points in the study guide, it can still boost your test grade to refresh your memory by taking advantage of the extra resources in your book to make sure you haven’t gotten rusty on things we covered in earlier weeks.