

How to be Successful in Lower Division Math at UCSD

By the Math & Science Tutorial Program (MSTP)

Math is not a spectator sport!

Be attentive during lecture. Ask thoughtful questions. Don't just sit and copy everything written on the board. Instead, think ahead about what the next step will be in solving a problem. Try Cornell style notes for more interactive learning. (Google "Cornell notes")

Read the book!

Just like a social science course, read the book cover to cover. The book has a lot more to offer than just what is boxed or bolded. It also has paragraphs containing important information. Your textbook has great example problems already worked out for you. Don't just skim the reading and jump blindly into the homework. Make sure you understand the examples before you attempt the homework.

Practice makes better!

You know the old saying, "Practice Makes Perfect"? Well, it isn't true. However, practice will make you *better* at math. The only way to learn the material is to practice it. Do all of the homework; then do more practice problems!

Don't cram for exams!

Math is cumulative, so don't fall behind in your homework and in studying the material. Start studying for exams two weeks before the exam; that's right, *two weeks before the exam*. When you get your exams back, make sure to go over them entirely and correct your mistakes. Learn from your errors to prevent repeating them on the final exam.

Don't cower from office hours!

Your class may have hundreds of students, so asking questions can be intimidating. Instead, you can write down those questions and bring them to your professor's office hours. Your questions can come from lecture, homework, other study material, or your graded exam that you are reviewing.

Collaboration is the key!

Learning is a social process. It is more beneficial to work in a study group than to study alone. If you explain a concept or a problem to someone else, you will gain a deeper understanding of the material. If you are struggling with a problem, someone else in the group may help you understand it better.

One of the best places is OASIS!

Don't wait until the last minute. Get help immediately when you need it. OASIS offers workshops in Math 3C, 4C, 10A-C, and 20A-F. These workshops will help clarify difficult concepts, go over practice problems, review for exams, and give you a space to work with some of your classmates in a small group setting. It is best to apply for these workshops during Week 10 of the quarter before your course to better your chance of being admitted.

Keep a positive attitude!

There is nothing worse than the frustration of struggling with difficult material. However, if you can view it as a challenge rather than a problem, you are much more likely to get through it unscathed.