

Math Study Skills

Active Study vs. Passive Study

Be **actively** involved in managing the learning process, the mathematics and your study time.

- Take responsibility for studying, recognizing what you do and don't know, and knowing how to get your Instructor to help you with what you don't know
- Attend class every day and take complete notes. Instructors formulate test questions based on material and examples covered in class as well as those in the text.
- 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 Instructor's next step will be.
- Ask questions in class! There are usually other students wanting to know the answers to the same questions you have.
- Go to office hours and ask questions. The Instructor will be pleased to see that you are interested, and you will be actively helping yourself.
- 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 the Instructor: 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. Tests are probably spaced farther apart and so cover more material than before. The Instructor may not even check your homework.

- 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 two 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 to 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.

Reference:

Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. "Success in Mathematics." Saint Louis University <online 6/11/1997>.

