



Conquering Math Anxiety

Why do I need to learn mathematics? I'll never use it!

- Learning mathematics teaches one how to think, how to problem solve and makes the brain work in new ways including analyzing information, organizing thoughts and thinking abstractly.
- All careers and jobs use mathematics in some way: Technical, mechanical, health, hospitality, education, legal, entertainment, financial, the arts and retail fields all use mathematics regularly. In our personal lives we need mathematics to handle our own finances, do our shopping, measuring, cooking and calculating. ***Understanding math gives you power in the real world.***

I've never been good at math! It's been too long! I panic when I take a test! I don't understand this! The professor doesn't teach well!

- All of these statements are examples of negative self-talk, anxiety and thought processes called **cognitive interference**, which literally gets in the way of learning, and will sabotage one's ability to make progress learning mathematics.

Strategies for Conquering Math Anxiety

- Acknowledge your feelings – write them down. Understand that you are not alone. Take possession of your feelings and then work on learning new strategies to help you overcome the obstacles you are feeling.
- Understand that what you absorbed in the classroom is only the beginning. The real learning occurs while you are problem solving on your own.
- Take the mystery out of math! It's learning a new language, one concept at a time. Spend time working out each new concept by doing many problems until you feel a sense of accomplishment.
- Ask questions in class! The chances are that if you have a question, others in your class may also need the same information.
- Write out ALL the steps, leaving a written trail of each step. You can always go back and re-trace your steps.
- Homework is not the enemy! Homework is an opportunity to work on a new concept and master it!
- Don't fall behind! Work on mastering every new concept as soon as possible after it has been introduced and *before* the next class.
- Use your resources! Working with your notes, textbook, fellow classmates and tutors or utilizing your instructor's office hours can help support and reinforce what you began to learn in the classroom.
- **The Academic Learning Centers** at all three campuses have experienced tutors to help you succeed in your academic endeavors. Visit our website at www.ucc.edu/academics/alc for more information about tutoring hours available for the courses you are taking.
- For online practice, log on to the Academic Learning Center website at: <http://www.ucc.edu/StudentServices/ALC/ComputerAssistedInstruction/MathOnlinePractice.htm>
- **PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE** – just like in learning any language, confidence and proficiency comes with use! The more you use it, the more comfortable you will feel.
- Enjoy your new skills!



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Strategies for Preparing and Taking a Math Test

- Be well prepared by the day before the test. Finish preparing the evening before the test, but **DO NOT CRAM!**
- **Do not review the material on the day of the test.** Anxiety, confusion and self-doubt are likely to take hold. You won't learn anything new on the day of the test, so walk into the test fresh and as relaxed as possible.
- Get a good night's sleep and eat a nutritional meal on the day of the test.
- Sit in the front of the room. You are less distracted by others and can concentrate better.
- Read the instructions carefully.
- Look over the entire test before you begin. Get a sense of the whole test and then work on familiar problems first. After completing the easiest problems you will gain a sense of accomplishment and control and your anxiety will lessen.
- Show all your work and double check each step before you move on to the next.
- Don't let your feelings about a prior problem interfere with working on a current one.
- Avoid looking at the clock excessively. This isn't a race. (Don't be influenced by other students who may have completed the test early and may leave the room.)
- If you begin to panic, take several deep breaths and let them out slowly. Your body will begin to relax.
- Enjoy your new skills!