

Taking an Exam

Taking exams is probably one of the most important things that you'll do in a math class and so it's important to do the best that you can. Here are some ideas that will help you while you're taking an exam.

- **RELAX!!!** This is the first step to successfully taking an exam. Unfortunately, it's also one of the hardest things to do. The more worked up and nervous you are during the exam the more likely you are to forget something or blank out. The worst thing that you can do in an exam is panic.
- **Be Smart.** By this I mean be smart as you take the exam. You should go over the exam three times. First, go over the exam and work all the problems that you KNOW you can do. Second, work all the problems that you think you can do, but aren't sure. Last, go back and work the remaining problems. In this way you will get all the points that you know you can get.
- **Be Time Efficient.** Watch the clock. Don't spend a huge amount of time trying to get the points for one problem! If you spend too much time trying to get the points for one problem, you may not be able to finish the exam and lose more points than you gained by taking all that time for that one problem.
- **If You're Stuck Move On.** If you find that you're stuck on a problem, move on to a different problem and come back later to finish the problem. Don't waste time trying to get 10 points and then not be able to finish and miss 20 points because you ran out of time.

Note that is really the same as the previous tip, but it was important enough to make again and in a different way.

- **Show All Your Work.** Make it as easy as possible for the instructor to see how much you do know. Try to write a well-reasoned solution. If your answer is incorrect, the instructor will assign partial credit based on the work you show. Don't leave it to the instructor to read your mind trying to figure out if you knew what you were doing or not.
- **Never Leave a Problem Blank.** You should never leave a problem blank. Even if you don't know how to finish the problem, write down as much as you do know. The instructor can only give partial credit if there is something written down for the problem. Writing something down is not a guarantee of partial credit, but not writing anything down is a guarantee of no partial credit!
- **Read the Problem.** Make sure that you read the questions carefully and completely before you answer the question. If the instructor asks for the answer to be written in a specific form then make sure that you do that.
- **Does Your Answer Make Sense?** Make sure you've gotten an answer that makes sense.
- **Recheck Your Work.** If time permits go back over the exam and check every problem. This means completely rework the problem from scratch.

Thank you to Paul Dawkins for providing the original text!