Math

Study Skills Services
323 Oswald Building
246-6537

Bluegrass
Community & Technical College
Math

If you suffer from math anxiety, you are not alone. Math is, without a doubt, the most feared and despised subject for the majority of college students. Math anxiety is simply a term used to describe a student’s reaction when he/she approaches a mathematical situation. This does not mean that a student doesn’t have the mental capacity to understand and do math.

Math is different from other courses. In math class you must do more than just memorize the concepts and formulas. You have to be able to apply those concepts and formulas in order to solve problems. Math is a lot like a foreign language. It has its own symbols, terminology, and rules. You need to learn the “language” in order to do well. Math is also a lot like learning to play an instrument; you have to practice it to become proficient.

Before Class

• **Overcome negative self-talk.** Tell yourself that you can learn math; remind yourself that you are smart enough. This approach will improve your attitude towards math.

• **Acknowledge your own successes and failures.** Take responsibility for your own studies, recognize what you do and do not know, and get help when you need it.

• **Read the textbook assignment.** When you are fresh, rested, and ready to concentrate, choose a quiet place and read your math.

• **Compile a list of questions, concepts, and terms that are unfamiliar or confusing.** Use your textbook to identify these and take the list to class to get assistance with the answers.

• **Purchase the appropriate calculator for class.** Read the instruction manual and learn to use your calculator proficiently. Take it to every class.
During Class

- **Attend every class.** Each math class builds upon the previous ones. You must keep up. Falling one day behind is bad news; falling a week behind could be catastrophic.
- **Be an active participant.** Take complete notes. Write down all the examples covered in class.
- **Ask questions.** Use the list you made prior to coming to class. Chances are other students have the same questions as you.
- **Practice “keystroke sequences” on your calculator as your instructor demonstrates them.** If a sequence gets too complicated, write it down and practice it later.

After Class

- **Do all of the homework** — no matter how much time it takes. The rule of thumb is 2 hours of study time for each hour in class; however math will probably require more time.
- **Do some math problems every day.** The “use it or lose it” principle applies here. Studying and understanding math requires constant reinforcement and repetition.
- **Form a study group.** “Teach” concepts to each other. Go over problems that have given you trouble. You’ll either find someone in the group who can help you or you’ll find that you’re all “stuck”. That’s when you need to get assistance from the instructor.
- **Get assistance as soon as you realize you need it.** Don’t wait until test time — that may be too late.
  - **Visit the tutoring center.** Tutors can explain concepts, give you hints, and show you how to do a problem, but they should not and will not do your homework for you.
  - **Visit your instructor during his/her office hours.** This shows initiative and interest and your instructor will be pleased that you are trying to help yourself.
Other Tips

- **Take math courses one after the other.** The longer the break between courses, the more likely you’ll forget important information.
- **Avoid math classes in the summer.** Summer sessions are shorter than fall and spring terms so the pace is more rapid, and you have less time to learn the material.
- **Be relaxed and comfortable while studying math.** Put on some comfortable clothes, sit in a comfortable chair, and do some deep breathing exercises before you tackle your homework.

---

Free math tutoring is available at all BCTC campuses. Look for tutoring schedules at your home campus.