

Study Time

When you sit down to do your homework, what should you be doing? It may be tempting to think that the only thing you need to do during your homework time is the problems that your instructor has assigned that will be graded. Those problems are just a portion of the work that you will need to do during your homework time. Perhaps it would be better to call “homework time” “study time” instead.

You have probably been told that you should spend at least two hours of study time outside of class for every hour of time you spend in class. If you think about it that means that at least two thirds of your math learning will take place outside of your math class. Study time is when you read about what you learned, revise your notes, and practice the new material. It is also when you go back to review previous material so that you make sure to retain your knowledge from previous chapters. It is crucial that you use this time to allow your brain to make permanent connections with the new material that is covered in a class period. If you don't take the time, your brain can't retain the new information.

It may be helpful to block out how you will spend your study time before you get started. Perhaps you will spend $\frac{1}{2}$ hour reading the section of the book and reading through and revising your notes. A break at that point might be helpful. When you come back to studying after your break, it may be a good time to begin to do some practice problems. Odd problems are the best ones to do for practice when you first start since you can check your answers. When you check your answers, don't just look to see if it is right or wrong and then move on. You want to try to figure out your mistakes if you were wrong. Often looking at the correct answer will help you to find your mistake. The point of practice is to begin to move you towards mastery of the material.

It is important to be strategic about how you spend your time during your study time. You may be spending hours on your math each night but not getting the biggest benefit from that time. For instance, you shouldn't spend 45 minutes trying to figure out just one problem. If you get stuck either get some help, or move on to the next problem. Make sure to make note of which problem you

got stuck on so you can seek help later. You want to spend your time in the way that is most beneficial to your learning and retaining the math.

Once you are done with your assigned homework you can go back through previous material to keep yourself fresh on all the concepts taught in your current class, you may want to read the next section of the book to get ready for the next class, or you may want to begin to study for the next test you will have.

Here are some additional tips for using your study time effectively:

1. Plan your study time. Allow at least two hours for every hour you spend in class.
2. Have a designated place to do your math. It could be a specific place in your home that is dedicated to studying or it could be in the MARC or another location on campus.
3. Read your math notes on the same day that you wrote them. Research shows that we lose most of the information we learn unless we review it the same day.
4. Read the section of the book that you just covered thoroughly
5. Make a summary sheet of math terminology or properties in each section. This act of summarizing and rewriting can deepen your understanding of the concepts presented, enhance your ability to remember them, and serve as a study sheet for your test.
6. Do your homework on the same day that it is assigned, or at least by the next class session. The only way to learn math is by doing it. Don't get behind. The next lesson will build on the concept and the course can become a struggle.
7. When you have finished your homework check your answers by looking in the back of your book. Try and figure out why you missed the problem and correct the mistake.

8. Mark homework problems you still do not understand, ask a classmate, tutor or your instructor. Write out specific questions and get them answered as soon as possible. After you have had your questions answered, go back and try to do the problems on your own again. Make notes on what you learned so you can go back and study it later.

9. Use your homework problems to build a list of practice test problems.

10. Read the next section of the book to prepare yourself for the next class meeting.

11. Keep your homework and notes in an organized notebook so you can find the information you need quickly.

12. Remember that studying and doing your homework are not necessarily the same thing.

