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10 STRATEGIES FOR MATH SUCCESS AT RANKEN

Read the Book

Read carefully over the assigned sections and look carefully at the sample problems. It is beneficial to read the material before and after the material is covered in class. Reading the material before it is covered in class helps put the information into context. When the concepts are familiar, they are easier to understand. Reading the material after it is covered in class helps you retain the information and pick up on further details not understood prior to the classroom explanation. Rereading chapters is also a good method of studying and preparing for tests.

Develop a Sound Math Foundation

Because most math courses build upon themselves (new concepts are added to and build upon previous concepts), it is very important that the early material be mastered thoroughly. Similarly, mastery of material from previous courses makes success in later courses more likely, so continually review and practice concepts from prior math classes.

Requesting a math course each semester until your math requirements are satisfied is also wise in order to keep the information fresh. See Academic Advising for scheduling possibilities.

Take Advantage of Support Services and Materials

Discover the support services and materials available to you in Ranken's Student Success Center: workbooks, graph paper, note cards, videos, peer tutors and instructor tutors. Using these resources from the start of the course may help your confidence and get you off on the right foot. Minimally, make use of these resources as soon as you feel uncomfortable with the material or as soon as you receive a low test or homework grade. Do not wait until it is too late!

Prepare and Use Your Supplies

Being prepared for each class involves several important factors:

- Complete any previously assigned homework.
- Compile a list of questions about the previous assignments to ask the instructor.
- Preview the material to be covered that day.
- Take your textbook and/or workbook to class.
- Carry the proper supplies to each class: calculator, pencils, erasers, lined or graph paper, etc.

Manage Your Time

Complete all readings and homework assignments as soon after they are announced as possible. Complete all assignments before new material is covered, and always be sure to submit your work on time. Do your assignments early enough that you may get help with the things you do not understand. Math help is always available in Ranken's Student Success Center.

Self-Advocate

If you have a learning or other disability, remember that an extended time accommodation may be possible for testing. See the Student Success Center for more information.

Use Your Calculator

Learn how to use your calculator effectively and efficiently, especially if exams are timed and you have trouble completing tests in the allotted time. Check with the instructor about suggestions for the appropriate calculator to purchase for the class. Be sure the machine comes with an instruction manual, and read the manual. Learn how to use important function keys. Get in the habit of carrying the calculator with you. It is better, in the long run, to become proficient with your own calculator rather than borrowing other people's calculators. However, if you do forget your calculator, you may check one out, for short-term use, from the Student Success Center.

Organize Your Work and Write Legibly

Write all numbers and variables clearly so they may be easily distinguished by you and by others.

Spaces are as important in math equations as the numbers and variables themselves. Allow enough space between different terms in an equation so that it is easy to distinguish them.

Be sure to line up terms in each step of the solution, and write steps one below the other rather than to the right or left. Use lined paper or graph paper to help organize the problems on your page. Use plenty of paper to work each problem. Recycle the paper at the end of the term if you are concerned about wasting paper.

Show Your Work

Avoid the temptation to skip steps when solving a problem in your math homework. Don't skip steps on an exam no matter how well you know the material. Showing your work allows you to locate logical or calculation mistakes more easily, and sometimes, partial credit is given for the correct portions of an answer.

Organize Your Information

Math information, including definitions, symbols, equations, and steps for solving problems, may be organized using flash cards and matrices.

Flash cards are useful for organizing all forms of math information. Blank index cards are available to students free of charge in the Student Success Center.

Matrices may be used to organize math symbols, equations, and definitions:

Term	Definition	Example
Numerator	Top number in a fraction	The 1 in $\frac{1}{5}$
Denominator	Bottom number in a fraction	The 5 in $\frac{1}{5}$

For additional assistance with math, visit the Ranken Student Success Center.

STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER
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