Strategies for Success in College Math

We’ve met with many students who struggle with college-level math. We understand that math can be challenging. Here are a few tips that you can utilize throughout the semester.

Studying on your own

- Create a study routine, including finding a quiet study space and creating a consistent study schedule. Try to commit to studying at least two hours per class hour. For more information on study skills, please see Study Skills Tip Sheet on www.cpcc.edu/star
- Read your textbook before each class. The goal isn’t to understand the material the first time you read it. The goal is for you to have an idea of what the instructor plans to discuss.
- Remember, math is a cumulative subject. This means that each math lesson builds upon the previous lesson. Make sure you understand the current math concept before moving to the next concept.
- The best way to build your math skills is to practice. Always complete your homework.
- When practicing math problems on your own, try using this four-step approach:
  - First, identify the problem and understand what the problem requires you to do.
  - Develop a plan for solving the problem.
  - Solve the problem. Write out the entire solution in as much detail as possible. Show your work.
  - Review your solution and check for accuracy. If necessary, rework the problem.

During and after class

- Attend every class. This is especially true if math is a difficult subject for you.
- Actively participate in class. Ask questions. Take notes.
  - Make sure your notes are legible and neat, so you can review them later. Write down specific examples of problems that your instructor completes in class.
- After class, review your notes each day.
- Utilize your resources.
  - Visit your instructor during office hours if you need additional guidance.
  - The ALC here at CPCC offers free tutoring for developmental math and Math 110-285. Find the ALC on a CPCC campus near you here.
  - Join a study group if necessary.

Preparing for exams

- Don’t cram. Start studying early.
- Identify the type of test that it will be. Multiple choice, word problems/short answer, etc. What information will be on the test? Is the test covering a specific chapter? Is it cumulative?
- Remember, completing your math homework is key to preparing for an exam. Review old tests, notes, and complete practice problems. Your textbook will likely have a review section, also.

If you have additional questions, feel free to call to speak with a STAR coach at 704-330-6754 or email star.success@cpcc.edu. Check out the rest of our tip sheets on our website http://www.cpcc.edu/star.


George Polya. “How to Solve It: A New Aspect of Mathematical Method”.