

## Math Anxiety Help

There are many sites that can help you with your math anxiety. First, realize that not a day goes by that math instructors don't hear from students who have a hard time with math. They believe they are not good at it, and thus decide that they hate it. But it doesn't have to be that way! Wake up every morning and tell yourself that ***you can DO this***. Your brain's job is to learn, and it knows how to learn just as your stomach knows how to digest food, but you have to believe it before you can make it happen. Constantly telling yourself that you hate and can't do it is not going to make things any easier, so **STOP!**

### What Causes Math Anxiety?

Math anxiety does not have a single cause. Often math anxiety is the result of a student's negative or embarrassing experience with math or a math teacher in previous years. Such an experience can leave a student believing him or herself deficient in math ability. This belief can actually result in poor performance, which serves as confirming evidence to the student. This phenomenon is known as the self-fulfilling prophecy. Math anxiety results in poor performance rather than the reverse.

### What To Do About Math Anxiety?

Math anxiety is a learned psychological response to math, which interferes with a student's ability to perform math. It is not a reflection of a student's true ability in math. There are a number of strategies a student can use to overcome the anxiety response. Some of the primary strategies are described here.

- Be aware of thoughts, feelings, and actions as they are related to math. Math anxiety affects different students in different ways. It's important to be familiar with the thoughts you have about yourself and the situation when you encounter math. If you are aware of unrealistic or irrational thoughts you can work to replace those thoughts with more positive and realistic ones.
- Seek help! Math anxiety is learned and reinforced over a long period of time and therefore is not quickly eliminated. A student can reduce the

anxiety response more effectively with the help of a number of different services. If your class has attendance at the Math Activities Center as a requirement, utilize this resource by studying there consistently, and getting help on your math. The Tutoring Center on campus provides private tutoring at no cost to Solano students. This is another great resource, and it is located in Room 402/403.

- Learn the vocabulary of mathematics. One of the problems students have with math is understanding the terms and vocabulary. Math often uses words in a completely different way than they are used in other subjects. The word product is an example. Students often confuse lack of understanding of terms and vocabulary with math ability.
- Learn anxiety reduction and anxiety management techniques. Anxiety can greatly interfere with concentration, clear thinking, attention and memory. Students can learn relaxation anxiety management techniques that are very effective in controlling the emotional and physical characteristics of anxiety that are interfering with mental processing capabilities.
- Work on having a positive attitude about math. Having a positive attitude will build self-confidence and thus reduce anxiety.
- Learn positive self-talk. Giving yourself positive self-talk helps to counter and overcome your belief in the math myths or to stop playing mind games on yourself. Positive self-talk is effective in replacing negative thoughts, which create anxiety with positive thoughts that reduce anxiety.

## **Learn Effective Math Class and Study Techniques.**

Students who fear math often avoid asking questions to save embarrassment, sit in the back of the classroom, fail to seek help from the professor, and usually put off studying math until the last moment. All of these negative behaviors are intended to reduce the student's anxiety but actually result in more intense anxiety. There are a number of positive behaviors, which actually help the student learn and perform better in math classes. First, sit near the front of the class where you will experience fewer distractions and feel more a part of what is being discussed. Second, if you have questions, ask! Rest assured that you are not the only one who has the same question you want to ask. Don't be afraid to seek help from your professor after class or during office hours. Third, prepare! Read the textbook material before it is discussed in class. Do the problems. Math skill comes from practice and repetition. Finally, after class, review the material covered again.

## Some other useful links on Math Anxiety:

Advice on math anxiety:

<http://www.math.com/students/advice/anxiety.html>

Do you have math anxiety? A self-test is here:

<http://www.mathpower.com/anxtest.htm>

More tips:

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/plan/boost-your-skills/125.html>

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If you feel that you need more help, consider purchasing the following book, or check it out at the Solano College library.

[Overcoming Math Anxiety - Sheila Tobias](#)

"If you've ever said 'I'm no good at numbers,' this book can change your life." - Gloria Steinem