



Douglas College

Douglas College Learning Centre

MATH TEST TAKING: TUTORS' PERSPECTIVES

This handout includes two tutors' perspectives on how to tackle Math tests successfully.

Ghada's Perspective

1. Like other exams, I start with writing my name and student number on the exam paper.
2. I read the general instructions, if any, and I check the number of pages in the exam.
3. I skim over the whole exam.
4. I start with the questions that I am most familiar with first.
5. If the question is a word problem, I do the following:
 - Read the question two times.
 - Highlight the key words to clarify what the question is asking for.
 - Write down the information I have and the assumptions.
 - Draw a graph or a diagram to clarify the question, if necessary.
 - Write the formula(s) and solve for the variables.
 - When I use my calculator, usually I do each calculation twice to check if I get the same answer or not, because sometimes, especially during the exam, we may push the wrong button.
 - Write the unit of measurement beside each answer.
 - Look at the answer to see if it is reasonable or not. If not, I put an X mark beside the question then I move to other question.

If it is a multiple-choice question, I do the same as the above steps. Then I look for a match to my answer and circle it. If there is no match, I choose "none of the above".

6. After finishing all the questions, I review my paper starting with the questions that have an X mark.

G. Mahdi/May 2002

Brian's Perspective

Getting Started: I briefly scan through the whole test first to find out what will be easiest and hardest. I also check out which sections have the most marks.

Sections to be considered:

- a) Multiple Choice
- b) Calculations
- c) Problem Solving

My personal approach to this is to work in this sequence:

- 1) Calculations
- 2) Problem Solving
- 3) Multiple Choice

Reasons:

- Calculations give me the most confidence in a math exam because I can check my answers and make sure they are right. Since I know they are right, I am able to build my self-confidence toward the whole exam.
- Then I move on to Problem Solving because it generally has the most marks. One problem might be worth 10 marks, the equivalent of 10 Multiple Choice questions.
- Last, I do the Multiple Choice because they are usually worth the least marks and also they are the most confusing ones.

My strategies for Calculations:

- a) Step by Step, I do not skip any steps and I write all the steps down.
- b) I lay out my work carefully and neatly so that it is easy for me to go back and check.
- c) To check my work, I redo calculations to make sure the answers are right.

My strategies for Problem Solving:

- a) First, I extract numbers from the problem, list them again and label them. (E.g. principal = 200,000 dollars, time = 5 years, interest = 2.3% annually)
- b) I focus on understanding what the question is asking for by circling key words. (E.g. what is the future value?)
- c) I identify the formula to use (E.g. $y = mx + b$)
- d) I plug in the numbers for the known parts of the formula, and solve for the unknown.

B. Dai/May 2002