

After the Test

After taking a test, many students heave a big sigh of relief and try to forget it ever happened. Don't fall into this trap! An exam is a learning opportunity. It gives you clues about what your instructor thinks is important, what concepts and skills are valued in mathematics, and if you are on the right track.

- Immediately after the test, jot down problems that caused you trouble. Find out how to solve them by checking your textbook, notes, or asking your instructor or tutor (if available). You might see those same problems again on a final exam.
- After the test is returned, find out what you got wrong or had points deducted from. Write down the problem so you can learn how to do it correctly.
 - Sometimes you only have a short time in class to review your test. If you need more time, ask your instructor if you can look at the test in his/her office.
- Find out why you made the errors you made. Here is a list of typical reasons you might make errors on math tests.
 1. You read the directions wrong.
 2. You read the question wrong or skipped over something.
 3. You made a computation error (maybe even an easy one).
 4. Your answer is not accurate.
 5. Your answer is not complete.
 6. You labeled your answer wrong. For example, you labeled it "feet" and it should have been "feet²."
 7. You didn't show your work.
 8. You didn't understand the concept.*
 9. You were unable to go from words (in a word problem) to setting up the problem.*
 10. You were unable to apply a procedure to a new situation.*
 11. You were so anxious that you made errors even when you knew the material.

The first seven errors are test taking errors. They are easy to correct if you decide to carefully read test questions and directions, proofread or rework your problems, show all your work, and double check units and labels every time.

The three starred errors are test preparation errors. Remember that in order to grow a complex neural network, you need to practice the kinds of problems that you will see on the tests. So, for example, if word problems are difficult for you, you must do more word problems! If you have practiced the techniques in this workbook, however, you are less likely to make these kinds of errors on tests because you will have a deeper understanding of course concepts and you will be able to remember them better.

The last error isn't really an error. Anxiety can play a big part in your test results. Go back to Activity 8 in this workbook and read the suggestions about exercise and deep breathing. Recall from Activity 1 that when you are anxious, your body produces adrenaline. The presence of adrenaline in the brain blocks connections between dendrites. If you can reduce the adrenaline in your system, you will be able to think more clearly on your test. Even just five minutes of brisk walking right before your test can help do that. Also, practicing a relaxation technique while you do your homework will make it more likely that you can benefit from using it during a test. Deep breathing is helpful because it gets oxygen into your brain. When you are anxious you tend to breathe more shallowly, which can make you feel confused and easily distracted.

- Last, you must make a plan for the next test, based on your results from this one. You might review the Chapter Summary and work the problems in the Chapter Review Exercises or the Chapter Test. Ask your instructor or a tutor (if available) for more help if you are confused about any of the problems.

Keeping Track of Your Testing Skills

Below is a record sheet for you to use to track your progress in test taking. Use it to find out if you tend to make particular kinds of errors on tests. Then you can work specifically on correcting them. Just check in the box when you made one of the errors below. If you take more than five tests, make your own grid on separate paper.

Test Taking Errors

Test #	Read directions wrong	Read question wrong	Computation error	Not exact or accurate	Not complete	Labeled wrong	Didn't show work

What will you do to avoid these kinds of errors on your next exams?

Test Preparation Errors

Exam #	Didn't understand concept	Didn't set up problem correctly	Couldn't apply concept to new situation

What will you do to avoid these kinds of errors on your next exams?

Anxiety

Exam #	Felt anxious <u>before</u> the exam	Felt anxious <u>during</u> the exam	Blanked out on questions	Got questions wrong that I knew how to do

What will you do to reduce your anxiety before the next exam?
