

# Avoiding Test-Taking Errors in Mathematics

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## Misread-Directions and Careless Errors

- Read all directions carefully. If you do not understand, ask instructor for clarification to ensure that you will not make mistakes that can be located upon reviewing the test.

Misread-Directions Example: What is the product of  $(20x)12$ ?

Some students may solve for  $x$  when the problem calls for multiplication.

Careless Errors Example: Treating  $(-3)2x$  as  $6x$  instead of  $-6x$ , which is the correct answer.

## Concept and Application Errors

- Mistakes made when students do not understand principles or properties required to answer problem or do not know how to apply the concept to the problem.
  - Look for more information in other questions if you do not understand what you're supposed to do.

Application Example:  $2(1+3) - 2*5 = 30$  instead of  $-2$

Some students may forget the order of solving mathematic problems. Remember "Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally" which means that parenthesis are first, then exponents, next multiplication or division, and finally addition or subtraction.

Concept Error: If you must derive the quadratic formula, practice doing that backward and forward until you can describe the concepts used to move from one step to another.

## Test-Taking Errors

- Not completing a problem to its last step; changing correct answers to incorrect ones; spending too much time on one problem; rushing through the exam and making careless errors; miscopying an answer from scratch paper to answer booklet; or leaving answers blank.
  - Don't change your answers unless you're 100% sure.
  - Keep track of the time you have left and determine which problems will take more time to solve.
  - Work on problems you deem easier first, so you do not lose point if you run out of time and cannot finish the exam.

## Study Errors

- Studying the wrong material, not preparing in a meaningful way, or not spending enough time preparing.
  - Don't procrastinate.
  - Ensure you know what you will be tested on.
  - Review relevant examples.
  - Go to exam reviews.
  - Look back at old exams to limit repeating past mistakes.

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