Making friends with Math

1. Structure your study time for effectiveness
   a. Study in lots of small bursts. Try scheduling study sessions from 30 min to 90 min and see when you start to fade. Once you know that number, aim to plan one or two study sessions each day that are that long.
   b. Study without distractions. This is one area where you should not multitask. Turn off the radio, computer, phone, etc. and just do your homework.
   c. Schedule your study time when you’re alert. Find the time of day when you feel best (not hungry, tired, etc.) and reserve that time for studying.
   d. Learn how you learn! Are you an auditory learner? Visual? Kinesthetic? Knowing how you best learn will help you to make the most of your study time.
      • [http://homeworktips.about.com/od/homeworkhelp/a/lstyleqz.htm](http://homeworktips.about.com/od/homeworkhelp/a/lstyleqz.htm)
      • [http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html](http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html)
      • [http://www.2learn.org/learningstyles.html](http://www.2learn.org/learningstyles.html)

2. Check out your resources – before you need them!
   a. Instructor’s office hours
   b. Instructor’s email
   c. Drop-in tutoring in FL1-108
   d. Form a study group
   e. Textbook resources
      i. Free tutoring hotline
      ii. Web resources – Math XL/Course Compass
      iii. Examples worked out in textbook
   f. Online resources

3. Getting the most out of class
   a. Before class each day, review the topics from the conclusion of the prior class. Skim the material you’re scheduled to cover that day. Get your mind ready to hear what’s coming up.
   b. Sit up front, listen actively, and participate during class
   c. If you don’t get it, ask questions!
   d. Meet some classmates. Get emails and/or phone numbers so you can do homework and study together and pull together study groups before exams.
   e. As soon as possible after class, work some of the homework questions. Even if you don’t have much time, doing 3 or 4 problems while they’re fresh in your mind will help you be successful later.
   f. When you’re doing homework, make notes for yourself about the process you used. Describe the process and how you know what to do when. Being able to see a problem and know how to proceed is a very important skill.

4. Getting ready for exams
   a. Create a study schedule about a week ahead of time.
   b. Go through your notes and make sure you identify the main ideas. Many instructors will identify problems and topics that will be covered on tests. Make sure you know how to do these problems. They’re freebies!
c. Review homework and make a list of the kinds of problems you did. Make sure you practice some of each kind of problem. When you do problems to study for the exam, pick problems with known answers so you can ensure you’re doing them properly. Don’t practice doing problems wrong!
d. Make flash cards/notes with important ideas, vocabulary and examples.
e. Practice doing problems in a mixed up order. It’s very likely that the problems on the test won’t be in the same order as the book. Make sure you practice looking at a problem and deciding how to solve it.
f. Make lists of problems/ideas that you don’t understand. Take that list to your study group/instructor/tutor and make sure you get all of them resolved.
g. Make a practice exam with your study group. Do the problems and discuss why you think each one will be on the exam.

5. Test Time!
a. SLEEP the night before. If you have to choose between sleep and last-minute study, choose sleep.
b. Don’t cram. Give your brain a rest right before the test and try to go in to the test as relaxed as possible.
c. Hit the restroom before the test. Don’t use valuable test time on a potty break.
d. Don’t panic! Have a strategy before you take the test.
e. Remember that anxiety is normal and plan for what you will do if you feel panic coming on. If it would help you, bring a memento with you that reminds you that you’re much more than just a test-taker.
f. Eat a good breakfast – get some protein to fuel your brain.
g. During the test, if you have a question, ASK! The worst thing that can happen is that you don’t get an answer. You have nothing to lose.
h. If you think you’ve made a mistake on the test, draw a single line through the work you think is wrong. Do not erase it. That way, if you later determine that it was right, you can still read everything you wrote.
i. If you have time, check your work before you turn in your test.

6. Post Test
a. When you get your exam back, go over it! Make sure you understand where you lost points and why. If you don’t understand something, take it to your instructor’s office hours and ask.
b. Keep your test and plan to use it to help you study for the final exam.

7. General Tips
a. Ask lots of questions in class but be sure to save questions that apply only to you for office hours or after class.
b. Try not to say “I don’t get it” – that doesn’t give the person helping you anything to work with. Instead, find the last thing that made sense, point to it and let the person know that you need to backtrack to that point.
c. Invest time in choosing your classes with care. Ask other folks for hints about good instructors and make sure that their style matches well with yours.