

TEN WAYS TO REDUCE MATH ANXIETY

OK, so math makes a lot of people nervous. Is there any hope? You bet there is! Below are a few helpful hints.

1. **You are not alone!** Relax. Many people dislike and are nervous about math. Even mathematicians are unsure of themselves and get that sinking, panicky feeling called "math anxiety" when they first confront a new problem.
2. **If you have math anxiety, admit it.** If you pretend not to have it, you will not learn to overcome it or manage it.
3. If you're having math trouble, **practice a little math each day.** (Do you think Mozart learned how to play the piano or Michael Jackson learned how to dance just by watching?)
4. **Ask questions.** Some people think asking questions is a sign of weakness. It's not. It's a sign of strength. In fact, other students will be glad. (They have questions, too.)
5. **Do math in a way that's natural for you.** There's often more than one way to work a math problem. Maybe the teacher's way stumps you at first. Don't give up. Work to understand it your way. Then it will be easier to understand it the teacher's way. Remember, "each mind has its own method."
6. **Notice your handwriting when you do math.** The sloppier it gets, the more confused or angry you probably are. When it gets really sloppy, STOP. Look away for a few seconds. Then erase the messy parts. Start again. Try not to let your attitude interfere with learning math.
7. **Know the basics.** Be sure you know your math from earlier grades. Maybe you missed something when you moved to a new high school. Face it: Math builds on itself. You have to go back and relearn that stuff. (Don't think, "I couldn't learn it before, so I can't learn it now." Remember it's never too late to learn. Besides, you're older now. It'll be easier and quicker to learn.)
8. **Don't go by memory alone.** Try to **understand** your math. Memorizing is a real trap. When you're nervous, memory is the first thing to go.
9. **Trouble with the text? Get another math book.** Maybe a book in the library will explain things better.
10. **Get help.** Everyone needs help now and then. Try to form a study group with friends (two heads are better than one), take a review course, or work with a SLAC math tutor. SLAC also has a large math self-help library and educational math handouts.

Source: "Nervous in Numberland," Scholastic Math, September, 1984, pp. 9 and 11. "Math! A Four Letter Word," Public Films Inc., 1988, pp. 30-31.

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