

How to do well on Calculus exams

Many times, Calculus students say that even though they understood the lectures and did well on the homework, they still did poorly on the exams. These are some tips that you can use to help you succeed on exams.

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Before lecture

- Skim the section(s) to be discussed so that you come to class having some idea of what will be discussed.

During lecture

- Come to every lecture and recitation!
- Ask questions (before, during, or after lecture) if something doesn't make sense.

After lecture

- Reread you class notes.
- Read the textbook sections, focusing especially on the examples and boxed formulae.
- Do the assigned homework, while the material is fresh in your mind.
- Come to office hours or e-mail the TA or instructor if you have questions.

At least several days before the exam

- Skim the class notes, textbook, and old homework assignments.
- Test yourself on unassigned homework problems (odd exercises are more helpful because of the answers in the back of the textbook). Be sure to look in the individual sections AND the practice exercises at the end of each chapter. Oftentimes, it is enough to simply look at a problem and ask yourself, "Could I do this problem on an exam?" If the answer is no, make sure you figure out how to do the problem before the exam (e.g. in office hours or by e-mailing the TA or instructor).
- Practice on as many old exams as you have time for, making sure you have completely done at least two before the exam.

The day before the exam

- Re-skim class notes, textbook examples, old homeworks, and any other problems you worked out (especially old exams).

The night before the exam

- Get a good night of sleep. Without this, the effectiveness of your preparation is significantly decreased.

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The day of the exam

- Look through a few last concepts that you found difficult, but no last-minute cramming.
- Be sure to bring plenty of pencils and erasers and your ID to the exam.
- Be there at least ten minutes early.

During the exam

- Don't panic!
- Start with a problem that you are fairly sure you know how to do.
- Don't spend too long on any one problem for the first half of the test.
- Ask the instructor or TA for clarifications if needed.
- Before turning in your exam, be sure to reread every problem on the exam. Many students have needlessly lost points because they forgot to answer one or more parts of a problem.
- Before turning in your exam, make sure that it is clear what you do and do not want graded. If it is easy to find, read, and understand your work, you are less likely to lose points.