

DO YOU AVOID MATH?

Does just thinking about math send chills up and down your spine? Would you rather do anything besides math? Some names for this behavior are math avoidance, math phobia, and math anxiety.

Common reasons people feel this way

- Sometime during your educational career, you missed out on instruction because of sickness or another reason. When you returned, you found the class studying something new and unfamiliar. No matter how hard you have tried, math just has not made any sense since then.
- Family problems or other circumstances may have made it difficult for you to concentrate.
- You moved and the new school was studying something you had never seen before.
- You might have learned math anxiety from a parent, sibling or other trusted adult. That person feared math so you learned to fear math.
- You experienced an emotionally trying experience in conjunction with math. For instance, you might have been shy making it difficult to answer math questions in front of the class.

Ways to deal with a sudden wave of anxiety

- Take a deep breath
- Acknowledge your anxious feelings, then redirect your thoughts to the immediate challenge rather than dwelling on your discomfort
- Build up your confidence by going back (even for a few minutes) to a problem or a textbook section you find more comfortable. Then move forward.

Ways to have a more positive attitude about math

- Believe in your own abilities. Celebrate every success no matter how large or small.
- Use lots of positive self-talk (that running conversation you have with yourself). Replace negative thoughts with positive but realistic ones like "This is challenging but if I put the time in on it, I will be able to succeed."
- Don't waste your time with thoughts like "I hate math", "I don't need math", or "my mother was never good at math so I'm not either". Our modern society demands we all use math and ability is not inherited. No one has ever found a math gene.

DO YOU AVOID MATH? (Cont.)

Ways to have a more positive attitude about math (cont.)

- Prepare for success by establishing good math study practices like studying without distractions around you and allowing sufficient time to complete assignments and prepare for tests.
- Use all the resources available to you like the Academic Success Center, tutoring, visiting your instructor during office hours, and study in groups.
- Seek to *master* the material. Do not skimp on study time just because math is challenging for you. Mastering the material will generate confidence and banish anxiety.
- Do more than just the assigned problems. You can also work textbook examples (cover up the work then check yourself), unassigned problems, and similar problems from other textbooks in the Academic Success Center. College is all about doing what is necessary for you to master the material not about just about getting a passing grade.
- Look for the big picture. Work to identify the major concepts and how they fit together rather than seeing the material as unconnected problems to be worked.
- Try to look at each topic as though you have never seen it before. If you have attempted to learn a topic before, you may have misconceptions which are keeping you from correctly working that type of problem.
- If you do not understand something, keep seeking an explanation that makes sense to you.