I Got a C on My Midterm... Now What?

3. Find x.

Here it is
Today’s Objectives

- Reflect on the exams you’ve taken so far.
- Identify ways to improve your exam taking skills.
- Identify ways to ease exam anxiety.
- Learn tips on talking with your professor about your grades.
- Discuss how options like withdrawals and Freshmen Forgiveness can impact you.
Reflection Activity

Why did you come to this workshop?

What do you want to take away from today?
Exam Taking Skills

• Break in down into stages:
  • Before the test
  • During the test
  • After the test
Before: Get to Know the Test

- What kind of test am I taking?
- How much time will I have?
- What material is covered?
- How will the test be graded?

Math 208, Section 3
Exam 2

Show all work. How you get your answer is just as important, if not more important, than the answer itself. If you think it, write it.

1. (20 pts.) If

\[ f(x,y) = x^2y + 2xy - 2x^2, \]

where

\[ x = x(t) = t - \sqrt{t^2 + 3} \quad \text{and} \quad y = y(t) = t^2 + 1. \]

use the Chain rule to find \( \frac{df}{dt} \) when \( t = 1. \)

\[ \frac{df}{dt} = 2xy + 2y - 2 \]

\[ f_x = x^2 + 3x - 3y \]

\[ f_y = 2x \]

At \( t = 1 \)

\[ y = 1 - 1(1+2) = 1 - 3 = -2 \]

\[ x = 1 - \sqrt{3} \]

\[ y = 2 \]

\[ x_y = \frac{1}{2} \quad \text{if} \quad x = x(t) \]

\[ f_x = 2x\sqrt{t^2 + 3} - 2 = -6 + 2 = -4 \]

\[ f_y = 2xy - 2x \quad \text{if} \quad y = y(t) \]

\[ f_x = 2y \cdot x(\sqrt{t^2 + 3}) - 2x = 4 - 2 = 2 \]

\[ f_y = 2xy - 2x \quad \text{if} \quad y = y(t) \]

\[ \frac{df}{dt} = f_x + f_y \frac{dy}{dt} = (-4)\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) + (10)(2) = 80 - 3 = 77 \]
Before: Make a Study Plan

- What do I need to do in order to be prepared?
- Estimate how much time each item will take.
- Break up these tasks into manageable pieces and fit them into your schedule. Be as specific as possible!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekend</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gather materials – old exams, notes, and homework. Study ch. 1,2</td>
<td>Review ch. 1,2; study 3 &amp; notes</td>
<td>Review ch. 1,2,3; study 4 &amp; notes</td>
<td>Put hard to remember material on a master study guide.</td>
<td>Final review of study guide.</td>
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Before: Review Material Effectively

- Schedule short study periods and take breaks.
- Actively engage the material:
  - Understanding, not memorizing.
  - Writing notes and summaries.
  - Ask yourself questions as you read and study.
- Make flashcards.
- Complete practice problems and chapter tests.
- Turn section headings and statements into questions and then answer them.
  - i.e. Stages of Mitosis → What are the stages of Mitosis?
- Answer questions aloud or in writing.
Before: Simulate the Test Situation

- Why? You will have limited time in which to complete the exam, and you may be asked to perform a variety of tasks all in one exam.

- Anticipate the challenges. Study to learn the information, but also to be successful on the exam:
  - Time yourself on practice problems and responses.
  - Group ideas together, make note of themes and connections, write out sample outlines and responses (especially for essay exams).
  - Come up with a test strategy (which questions to attack first, amount of time for each question, etc.).
Before: Preparation

- The night before, put together everything you’ll need for the exam:
  - Textbook and lecture notes if the exam is open book.
  - Paper and several pencils with erasers.
  - Calculator with extra batteries.
  - Allowed materials (handouts, tables, note sheets, etc.).
  - Watch
- Get a good night’s sleep.
- Set a back-up alarm for a morning exam.
- Eat some food.
- Give yourself plenty of time to get to the room and use the extra time to relax.
During: Getting Started

• Do an information dump!
  • Before you begin answering, jot down hard-to-remember formulas and terms in the margins or back of the exam

• Establish your time management strategy.
  • Look at the entire exam before you start answering questions.
  • Take note of how many questions there are in each section, what types of questions they are, and how many points each section is worth.
  • Decide how much time you need to commit to each section and stick to your timeline. It is important that you finish the exam.

• Read directions carefully and underline key terms and phrases.

• Do easy questions first.
  • This will build your confidence and may give you clues for the more challenging questions.

• It’s OK to skip around.
  • If you get stuck on an answer, move on and come back to it later.
During: Tips for Math, Science & Engineering Exams

• Show your work.
  • Give enough detail so that both you and the grader can tell what you're trying to do.
  • Even if you can do the problem in your head, don't. If you're wrong and you didn’t write down your work, you earn zero credit; if you're right but didn’t show your work, you could be suspected of cheating.

• Watch for significant figures.
  • Some instructors don't appreciate answers like 23.694028, even if that's what the calculator says.

• Try to get partial credit.
  • Put something down for each part of every problem. If you don't have time to solve it completely, tell what you'd do if you had more time.

• Keep your work legible.
  • If an instructor can't read what you wrote, you aren't likely to get full credit and you may not get any at all.
During: Relax & Breathe!

- **Tense & Relax**
  - Place your feet flat on the floor in front of you.
  - With both hands, grab the underside of your chair.
  - Push your feet into the ground and pull on your chair upward. Tense your muscles, holding for 5 seconds.
  - Release your pull and relax your feet, letting your body go limp.
  - Repeat as necessary.

- **3 Deep Breaths**
  - Inhale through your nose, taking in air as if filling your abdomen.
  - Hold for 1 second.
  - Exhale slowly through your mouth or nose, making sure you exhale completely-push out every last bit of air.
  - Repeat two more times.
After

• Reward yourself!

• Analyze your exam experience
  • What went well and what didn’t?
  • What surprised you?
  • What types of questions did you find most challenging?
    Why?
  • What will you do differently?

• After you get your exam back, talk to your professor and TA about how you did.
Talking to Your Professors

- They are people too!
- Check your syllabus or Blackboard for their office hours and preferred way of contact.
  - Tip: Keep a list of all your professors and TAs office hour times and locations saved in your phone so you can always look them up.
- Remember to be polite, show up on time, and be respectful.
Talking to Professors: 5 Reasons to Use Office Hours

**REASON 1:** Introducing yourself.

**REASON 2:** Clearing up confusion.

- Tip: Go to office hours sooner rather than later.
- Tip: Prepare before you go. Bringing a list of questions will help keep you on track and boost your confidence.
- Tip: Take notes on what you talk about so you don’t forget.
- Tip: If you missed class, target the most important concepts.
Talking to Professors: 5 Reasons to Use Office Hours

REASON 3: Evaluating how you are doing and improving the way you study.

- Tip: Think about how you study for class.
- Tip: Use a recent test as a springboard.
- Tip: Don’t expect an instructor to be more lenient.

REASON 4: Enhancing your educational experience.

REASON 5: Discussing special requests.
Withdrawals & Freshmen Forgiveness

Freshmen Forgiveness

- First-time freshmen may repeat at USC a maximum of three courses taken during the first two semesters of enrollment at USC in which grades of D+ or below (including UW and IX) were received. The subsequent grade, even if lower, will be calculated in the grade point average. Both courses & grades received will appear on the transcript. The same course may be repeated no more than once for the benefit of substitution of grade.

Withdrawal

- After the 3rd week of classes and before the end of the 12th week of classes withdrawing from a class will result in a “W”.
- Fall 2013 Deadline for Withdrawal: November 15th
What to consider when debating withdrawing from a class:

- With whom should you speak?
  Faculty, Academic Advisor, Parents
- Make certain you are meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), in addition to scholarship or other special program unit requirements
- What are the implications of a “W”?
- Ultimately, you need to do what is best for you
References

- Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity (2011). Test taking strategies and test anxiety workshop. [PowerPoint slides].