

How to Use This Book



**“Just why do I have to learn this stuff anyway?
I’ll never use it in real life!”**

Maybe you’ve said that about math. Maybe it seems like the things your teacher wants you to learn couldn’t possibly be important outside of the classroom. You can’t imagine anyone in the real world asking you to “solve for x ” or plot out points on grid paper!

You’re right: Once you leave school, it’s not likely that anyone will ask you to use math in the same ways that your teacher might ask in the classroom. But you might find yourself figuring out the tip you need to leave a server at a restaurant or having to plan the shortest route to take on a trip. You might want to calculate the best value of minutes to dollars of a cell-phone plan or to figure out a budget for buying a car or a home. When you have to do those real-world tasks, you suddenly realize that math matters—and how well you understood it in school might make a big difference!

Don’t believe us? Then think about this:

Math is the foundation for your future.

Doing well in math in middle school will make it easier for you to do well in high school and beyond. Learning how to study math now will make your life easier down the road. You don’t have to love math, but you don’t have to be afraid of it either. Once you learn the techniques for studying math, you’ll find that math can be fun!

This book is designed to teach you the best ways to get organized, use your class time, study, and take math tests—whether you’re a longtime “mathlete” or someone who has always struggled with the subject before. You can use this book to help you “make the grade” in math in three ways.

First, if you’re at the beginning of a new year, a new course, or a new quarter or semester—or even a new unit—you can use this book to think differently about how you go about learning math. This book will help you get organized as well as think about how to participate in class. It will also show you how to take effective math notes and review them, and how to make the most of your resources—including your instructional materials, your teacher, and even your friends. When you are better organized and you see how all your “math tools” work together, you can understand math class better. Being savvy about your math resources sets the stage for making a good grade.

Second, if you’re already in the middle of your year, course, semester, or unit—and you’re totally lost and confused by what the teacher is covering—this book can help you figure out what went wrong and the best way to fix it. We’ve made you a special chart with common issues students have with math classes—and we tell you exactly what section of this book to read to fix them. You can quickly spot your problem area and then take steps to get yourself back on track.

Finally, this book includes a whole section on test-taking tips that can help you study for tests and quizzes. We tell you the best way to tackle everything from problem sets to essay questions—so you can get as many points as possible and get your best exam scores.

If you understand how to study math, you’ll find that is math not only not that difficult, but it can also be fun. Turn the page—and start making the grade!