

# MATH Test-Taking Errors

**Misread-directions errors.** Did you miss a critical word in the question? Did the question have two parts? Did the question ask that you put your answer in a particular form? If you do not understand the directions, ask for clarification.

**Careless errors** are mistakes you can point out or solve in a few seconds. If you cannot find an error immediately, it is not a careless error and is probably a concept error. Answer these two questions: “How many points did you lose due to careless errors?” and “How much time was left in the class period when you handed in your test?” Don’t leave early. Note what types of careless errors you made; did you not simplify your answer? You missed a negative or positive sign? Etc.

**Concept errors** are mistakes made when you do not understand the properties or principles required to work math problems. Just going back to rework a concept error problem is not good enough. You must go back to your textbook or notes and learn why you missed that type of problem. Make a “Test One Concept Errors” page. Write down all your concept errors and how to solve the problems. Then, work five more problems that involve the same concept. Now, in our own words, write the concepts that you are using to solve these problems. If you cannot write a concept in your own words, you do not understand it.

**Application errors** occur when you know a concept but cannot apply it to a problem. They usually are found in word problems, deducing formulas, and graphing. To reduce application errors, you must predict the types of application problems that will be on the test, then think through and practice solving those types of problems using the appropriate concepts.

**Test-taking errors** apply to the specific way you take tests – to bad test-taking habits.

1. Missing more questions in the first third of a test can be due to carelessness when doing easy problems or due to test anxiety. Be careful. Relax. Missing questions in the last third of the test can come from increasing your speed to finish the test. Preview the test; plan your time.
2. Not completing a problem to its last step. Review the last step of each test problem first, before doing an in-depth test review.
3. Changing test answers from correct ones to incorrect ones. Change answers only if you can prove to yourself that the changed answer is correct.
4. Getting stuck on one problem and spending too much time on it. Use allotted time and move on. Come back later.
5. Rushing through the easiest part of the test and making careless errors. Review the easy problems first.
6. Miscopying an answer from your scratch paper to the test. Systematically compare your last problem step on your scratch paper with the answer written on your test. And also always turn in your scratch paper with your test.
7. Leaving answers blank will get you zero points. Write down some information about the problem, rewrite the problem, or try to do at least the first step.
8. Solving only the first step of a two-step problem. Write “two” in the margin to remind you that there are two steps or two answers to the problem.
9. Not understanding all the functions of your calculator (if you are allowed to use one) can cause major testing problems. Overlearn how to use your calculator before the test.
10. Leaving the test early without checking all your answers is costly. Ignore exiting students, and always use the full time allowed.

**Study errors.** You study the wrong material or do not spend enough time on pertinent material.