

There is a lot you can learn about yourself, your study habits, and your test-taking skills by examining your finished test. Did you do as well as you thought you could? Or is there room for improvement? You may think, “the test was just too hard” or “I didn’t recognize these problems from my homework”, but, chances are, this test has been given under similar conditions to many students before you. So let’s see what **you** can do to earn a higher score on your next test.

Look at your completed test and analyze whether each point loss was due to your having been **unprepared** for that problem, a **concept error**, or a **careless error**.

Do you know how to see your completed test? Click on “Gradebook” in the left-hand menu, then click on the “Review” link next to the test you want to analyze. Have your test scratch paper available, too.

Being **unprepared** for a problem really means you didn’t know how to do the problem. Maybe you had skipped the homework problems that would have prepared you for it. Or, it may have been a long time since you worked on the homework for that concept.

A **concept error** is one where you really didn’t understand the concept behind the problem. No matter how much time was available for a problem like this, you wouldn’t have been able to do it because you didn’t know how to approach it.

A **careless error** is one where you understood the problem and knew how to solve it, but you made a mistake that could have been avoided. Maybe you copied the problem or your handwriting incorrectly, made a relatively minor mistake in calculation, or typed your answer in the wrong format.

1) On a separate piece of paper, make a chart like the one below with one line for each problem on the test. Put the **number of points you missed** on each problem under the correct heading and then find the total in each column.

Problem	unprepared	concept error	careless error
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
...			
	Total points	Total points	Total points

2) In which column did you have the most missed points?

3) What does this tell you about yourself?

4) What can you learn from this exercise?

Being Unprepared

Consider the points you lost because you were **unprepared**.

Why did you take the test without being fully prepared? Oftentimes, activities and responsibilities in life interfere with good intentions about being diligent in attending class, reading the textbook, and doing all of the assigned problems. It may be time to:

Re-examine your weekly schedule and make sure you are devoting a sufficient amount of time to this class. Lay out a time management grid of your schedule making sure to schedule your math study time.

Re-commit yourself to succeeding in this class. Think about your college and career goals and remind yourself of how this course helps you get one step closer to achieving them.

5) List two steps you will take to remedy being unprepared.

a.

b.

Concept Errors

Now consider the **concept error** point loss.

A high total in this column tells you that you didn't understand the concepts very well. As you do your work day-to-day you might think you "get it", but you don't always make sure that you completely understand each problem in the homework. You may be getting used to using the "Help me solve this" feature of the homework system, or only understand the concept for the two hours you're working on the problems and forget it the next day.

Review earlier sections. Spend some of your homework time reviewing earlier sections, instead of saving all the review for test time.

Get the help you need immediately! Math concepts build on each other. Each new idea is based on many previous concepts. Make sure you get the help you need immediately, as soon as you find yourself beginning to feel lost, so that the confusion doesn't compound itself – otherwise it can become like a snowball, getting bigger and bigger as it rolls through the snow. If you find you're using the online "helps" for every problem, it may be time to watch the video presentations or go to a Hub to ask some questions.

If your total loss due to concept errors is fairly large, use your resources to get the help you need. You can ask your instructor, visit the Hub tutors, or talk to a classmate.

6) List two places you can go to get help with your math:

a.

b.

A high concept error total is cause for concern and must be addressed immediately to guarantee success!

Careless Errors

Next, look at the **careless error** point loss.

Careless errors are often caused by hurrying during a test or by lack of concentration due to test anxiety or over-confidence. So here are some strategies that have worked for other math students:

Do the easiest problems first. When you first start on a test, look at all of the problems and note which problems will be easiest for you. Do all those problems first, to ensure that you don't leave an easy question unanswered, just because it's at the end of the test. Finishing the problems you find easy will help build up your confidence! Then go through the rest of the test from beginning to end.

Work carefully and neatly. As you do each problem, try to focus on one step at a time.

Review each problem to look for careless errors, when you finish the test. Find and correct common careless errors like arithmetic mistakes and sign errors before you click on "submit". Also make sure that you typed in the answer you calculated and that you are following the instructions for formatting your answer.

Whenever possible, **check your answers.**

A lot of points can be gained from slowing down and being careful.

7) What are two things you will do next time to prevent careless errors?

a.

b.

8) Now take half of your "careless" points and add them back to your test total.

a. What could your test grade have been?_____

b. Would that have changed your A/B/C grade?_____