

# PASS MATHS ONCE AND FOR ALL



## *With Eddie Leighton's Action Plan*



Is that you?! Back in that maths class, again...and wondering if Lady Luck will smile on you this time, and squeeze out a grade 1, or even a grade 2 for that matter, so that you can get on with your life? If only you knew exactly what to do to get through this maths exam.... If only.

Sounds familiar? Well there is a formula for success in CXC mathematics! Read on as Eddie Leighton, shares his personal surepass tips with you in this article written exclusively for CHOICES readers.

**Y**ou can achieve excellence in mathematics if you really want to. The truth is that all achievement is possible if there is a desire to attain a specific goal. The steps required to get through these exams will be outlined below. These steps, if followed closely will undoubtedly lead to success.

The first step is to immediately implement a step-by-step approach. Remember you can be flexible in this and tweak it as necessary as you go along. But once you have decided on

your goal and your deadline you must believe in it and do whatever is necessary to achieve it, but never change it.

The second step is to clear your mind of any doubts which can hinder your progress. The best way to do this is to find success stories - case studies of students who have moved from failure to success in cxc mathematics. There are many such cases. This will help to boost your confidence in your ability to overcome barriers to your success. You will begin to realise that it is not only possible, but achievable for you!

The next step is to determine your true level in mathematics.

This can be done by an experienced teacher, who can set diagnostic tests to evaluate your competence in the four fundamental topics in mathematics: algebra, computation, geometry and graphs. This is a crucial step which is often omitted to the detriment of the individual. The student must be careful when doing this evaluation, however. Your faith and confidence in yourself will be tested when you realise how much you don't know which you should know. Remember, all things are possible and you know that what you are attempting to achieve has been achieved before. It is the attitude and not the aptitude which determines one's altitude.

After a proper evaluation determine how much time you have, and how much time you need. Again a good teacher can assist you here. Based on your current level, the time you have available and the rate at which you learn you can set a deadline for mastering mathematics (and getting that grade 1).

Now comes the action plan. This plan can be broken down into three components:

1. Topic by topic Study
2. Revision
3. Exam preparation

# PASS MATHS ONCE AND FOR ALL

## 1. Topic Study

You need an organised and structured approach to comprehensively cover the syllabus requirements. Enroll in a programme with a track record of excellence. Check the track record of the teacher. If the teacher is good you will know in a short time. You will learn when a good teacher is teaching. Some students do very well without attending classes, however. You must be very motivated and organised to take this approach and if you decide to go this route you will need a resource person and an excellent text to assist you when you need help.

Comprehensive topic coverage includes:

- a) Understanding the basic principles (teacher or text book)
- b) Use worked examples to enhance your understanding of the topic. Read through the examples carefully. Then do the solutions on your own completely.
- c) Do as many simple questions on the topic to consolidate your understanding of the

principles, formulas etc. Exercises in textbooks will do here or assignments in classes

d) Attempt more challenging questions (in order of difficulty). You may need assistance here. Ultimately you must be able to solve all questions on the topic on your own. Mark an asterisk beside any question which you have problems with. These questions must be repeatedly reviewed until they are no longer a problem.

e) Do past paper questions on the topic. This is the real test of course. When you can do every past paper question set on the topic for the last 20 exams you will definitely believe that you will be able to do the one which will appear on your upcoming exam.

## 2. Revision

Topic study without a programme for periodic review and consolidation will lead to forgetting and frustration. After every 4 or so topics, do revision papers from past papers, multiple choice questions and revision tests. Use revision books, multiple choice books, etc for this. Encourage your teacher to give many review work sheets and tests. Ensure that tests are frequently given and speedily corrected.

Feedback on your performance is crucial. When your test papers are returned immediately make every necessary correction and mark questions which you had problems with.

When revising pay special attention to all questions which you marked and review them.

## 3. Exam Preparation

How many times have we heard of students who performed well during the year and did poorly in the examinations?

This is mostly a result of poor examination preparation. An effective examination preparation plan includes the following steps.

### Topic Revision

This is best achieved in topic blocks e.g. numbers, computation and consumer arithmetic could be dealt with in one block. Review notes and jot down key facts and formulas on flash cards. Practise past paper questions from the last ten exams related to the topics reviewed. For each question ask yourself, how would I approach this question in the exam? Completely solve all past paper questions, again noting important facts and highlighting problem questions for final revision.

# PASS MATHS ONCE AND FOR ALL

## Exam practice

Under simulated exam conditions practice complete exam questions (both paper 1 and paper 2). Review your solutions with your teacher and grade your paper. Five complete practice exams should do.

## Exam preparation

Know the instructions for each examination paper. Familiarise yourself with the format and time frame. Know all the tools required for the exam: pens, sharpened pencils, long ruler, short pencil, time table, geometry set, calculator, ID if necessary, watch.

## Last-minute revision

Review your key facts and formulae on your flash cards. Review past paper questions which you have highlighted. Get a good night's sleep. Always go to bed in a positive frame of mind!!

## In the exam

Maintain a positive attitude throughout. Never panic or worry. Squeeze out every possible second from the exam to show what you are

worth. If the exam appears to be difficult it is very likely that it is difficult for the majority of the candidates. So don't waste time fretting. Just press on to improve your score.

If you are not sure about a question just quickly write down your best response and move on. Above all maintain a positive attitude in the exam. Ensure that you do your best and do not waste any time.

**Eddie Leighton is Chief Executive Officer of Maths Unlimited.**

