

GENERAL PRAXIS II MATH ADVICE

The week before the exam, visit the test site. Know how long it takes to get there, and find exactly where the building is.

At the exam, if your particular seat is not as well-lit as others, ask to have your seat changed.

Consider how quickly you need to work.

Although some state versions differ, if you are taking a 150 minute exam with 60 multiple choice questions, that averages to about 2.5 minutes per question. For a 120 minute exam with 55 multiple choice questions, that leaves you with about 2 minutes per question. With some questions you may be able to simply write down the answer in a few seconds. Others will be quite time-consuming. Expect some questions of a type you have never seen before, no matter how many practice problems you have done. So you really have to work quickly! This means swallow your pride (and we math people have huge egos - "I can do that problem if I only had a little more time ..."), use the calculator for a problem you know you can do without it, and simply give up and move on when a problem is taking more than say three minutes.

As an example, suppose you need to find the zeros of $y = x^3 - 5x^2 - 44x - 60$. You can solve this by trial and error eventually, but there are a lot of factors of 60 to test. If you know how to do this on the graphing calculator, then it is a pretty quick solution. The calculator is quicker, plus the chance of making an arithmetical error without the calculator is huge.

If there are several approaches on a problem, take a moment's thought before diving in: possibly one approach is much quicker. I confess on the exam to solving a logarithmic equation to get an answer that I should have simply written down from basic principles.

Learn to do the specific calculations recommended by ETS on the graphing calculator: graph functions and analyze the graphs, find zeros of functions, find points of intersection of graphs of functions, find minima/maxima of functions, find numerical solutions to equations, and generate a table of values for a function.

Use smart multiple choice exam strategy: Can you simply plug in the answer choices and see which works? Can you use the answer choices to estimate the answer or to look for a factor you may not have considered? (For example, if all the answer choices contain the square root of 3, consider what might have to occur in the solution to get to that.) Can you use the more specific results of a general statement to your advantage? (For example, if a statement says it is true for all equilateral polygons, can you do anything with an equilateral triangle? Or if a statement is true for all integers N , can you substitute $N=1$ and $N=2$?) If you don't know an answer, guess. (There is no penalty.) Eliminate obvious outliers. Make sure you answer specifically what they ask.

Use the rest room facilities before the exam; you are not going to have time during the exam.

Good luck! © Jerome Tuttle

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