

The Color Method - Studying for Math (and many other classes)

Much of the problem with studying for math, or testing in math, comes from the frustration of where to begin. Students are often told to look over their notes, read the chapter, and do some practice problems, but what happens when you don't know how to begin to solve the problems?

I would like to show you one method for studying in math that I have personally used in every math class, along with every science, engineering, and foreign language class that I took in college. As a peer tutor at Thiel College, I have shown this method to my tutees, and those who embraced it went from failing classes to having the highest grades in their class. Here's the catch: in order for this method to work, you have to buy in 100%; you will not get the results if you don't put in the effort consistently.

Math can seem very overwhelming because of the amount of material covered in a short span of time. Because of the vastness, students often think the only way to study for math is to mindlessly do tons of practice problems. When you do problems without a plan of how to solve them, you solidify the mistakes with each new question. So the idea is this: learn the process, and apply it to any problem.

So, here is The Color Method. You will consolidate all your notes that will be on the test into one or two pages worth of material that are organized in order of priority and significance. To do this you will cut out all example problems and any extraneous information. The reason for cutting out all example problems is that they take up so much space and detract from strictly learning the process.

The organization of your study guide will be arranged according to four different colored pens. We see and process information in color, so using color to study helps with recall, organization, and processing. By consolidating the information, you will feel less stressed by the sheer amount of information and be able to focus your attention on what is important.

The Colors and Their Meanings:

1. **Black** - Titles / Separators
2. **Green** - Reminders of Common Mistakes / Helpful Notes
3. **Blue** - Definitions / Lists of Steps
4. **Red** - Formulas / Theorems / Things you had better not forget

Once you have gone through your notes, written down the key information by color, and reviewed the information on your new study page, go ahead and try some practice problems. I recommend trying the odds, or ones that you can find the right answer to, just so you can check for sure that you've done the problems correctly. Read through your new sheet several times, share and compare with your friends, and practice the process of solving problems.

This strategy teaches you to think about what you're learning in class by looking for patterns, prioritizing information, and by understanding the processes involved in solving different types of

The Color Method - Studying for Math (and many other classes)

problems. It's good for many different types of learners because the method makes use of movement, visuals, creativity, and even verbalization.

Yes, this method is time consuming up front, but it alleviates the stress of cramming and of having to study hundreds of pages of notes, and it will help you to become a more organized, and consequently more efficient, student. When using this method, it is crucial to be consistent in reviewing and prioritizing your information. Be proactive and start the sheet early in your chapter so that you only have to add a little bit every few days instead of trying to learn everything the night before.