

Math COMPASS Exam Test Tips

Please consider printing out these directions for reference while taking your practice tests.

Take Your Time: The COMPASS Exam is not a race. Spending a little more time on test day can save you a whole lot of time not taking an extra math class. Double check your answers, try doing the problem different ways to see if you get the same answer, and take time to breathe if you're getting stressed.

Get the First Five Questions Right: The COMPASS Exam is responsive, pushing you up levels of difficulty as you get answers correct. The more consecutive questions you get right, the higher the level. The higher the level, the more points you get. Don't submit an answer on the first five questions until you know you're right!

Tips on the Questions:

1. **Use your calculator to your advantage.** Spend some time prior to the exam getting used to the basic Windows calculator (below). Knowing how to plug things into the calculator may save you on questions you don't know how to do by hand!



2. **Use the answers to your advantage.** The right answer is sitting right in front of you! If you don't know how to solve or get the equation for a graph, test the answers you're given until you find one that works.
3. **Eliminate obviously wrong answers.** If you don't know the answer, but you know it's going to be some horrible decimal and answer C is 10, then C is obviously not correct. Mark it off and look at the remaining four answers.
4. **Know what's important.** Many questions involving a variable on the bottom of a fraction have something like $b \neq 0$ in them. They have to put this in there but it doesn't affect how you do the problem. Don't worry about it. Focus on what you have to do, bringing in other information only *as you need it*.
5. **Know your vocabulary.** Words like perimeter, sum, difference, product, quotient, solution, slope, intercept, etc. are important and come up often. As you go through the practice tests, any words you are not familiar with you should look up on one of the Academic Resources sites and get comfortable with. Don't ignore them!
6. **Know your formulas.** As you go through the practice test, you may notice that they assume you know certain formulas, e.g. the distance formula. If they assume this on the practice, they will assume this on the COMPASS. Make sure you know them.
7. **Know how to plug numbers into an equation/expression.** It comes up often and it helps even on problems that don't specifically ask you to do it. Get comfortable with negatives and parentheses.
8. **Know how to factor.** Seriously. It comes up a lot so the sooner you get it down, the better.