

Dear Prospective Online Student:

Congratulations for choosing the online format to satisfy your Math 120 requirement. I have some thoughts to share with you about your decision.

As you may have heard, this course is very difficult. If you learn better in a traditional classroom setting, with teacher and student interaction and the stimulation that environment provides, this class may not be for you. I chose the online format because the thought of driving to campus 4 days/week was unacceptable to me. I also work full time and have a dog to whom I'm devoted, and didn't want to spend time away from him if I could avoid it. This was also the first class I've been enrolled in for over 20 years. That being said, this was probably as smart a decision as running the San Francisco Marathon... Not such a good one.

However! Now that I'm almost finished with the class, it doesn't seem quite so bad. Most importantly, the instructor is very nice and helpful. She's also readily available to her students and tells you the truth about the difficulty of this class--the first two chapters in particular. For the first couple of months, I was completely overwhelmed and ready to quit. Dr. Moss assured me that it would get easier after the first test. She was right. GET THROUGH THAT FIRST TEST. You can always keep in the back of your mind that you're allowed one "throwaway" test, so just let it be the first one if necessary. (For me, however, the throwaway test ended up being test #4.)

Keep all your tests and answer keys to study for the final. Don't throw anything away! Your calculator is your friend. Learn to use it and it will make your life in this class much easier. I had never used anything more sophisticated than the common "add-subtract-multiply-percentage" version, and I thought this thing was just CRAZY!

Also, please take advantage of the virtual classrooms. These are great, and often (shockingly) unattended; you'll often find yourself with just the instructor or one other student. Dr. Moss is extremely helpful, and she honestly wants you to succeed. She gives you helpful tips, and secret little things that can help you figure stuff out more quickly.

I absolutely hated the online quizzes. My idea was to log in and write down the problems, try to solve them on my own, then going back in and put in the answers I thought were correct. Didn't work. Never worked for the duration of the class, yet I continued with this failed strategy.

The good news was the homework. The online homework is totally cool. Since it's interactive, you can try similar problems again and again until you're able to figure out what you're doing wrong, and can adjust your strategy. The credit I received from both written and online homework helped to make up for the very poor showing on the quizzes. Oh yeah, and try to all finish homework 24 hrs in advance—the extra points really help.

Finally, make and use (if necessary) your 2% card. Without it, I would have put my head down on my desk and sobbed at each test that appeared in front of me, and then would have run from the classroom. The sight of that blank sheet is truly painful, and your head empties on sight..

I am taking the Math 200 online class with the same instructor. So, how bad could it have been? My plan for next semester will be to work AHEAD of schedule, and make time to focus on my homework more. Maybe we won't have any online quizzes! I'll also try to participate more in the discussion board. Since I never really had any "aha" moments, I didn't have much to share!

GOOD LUCK!