

Note Taking Tips for Math

Write down the title of the lesson. If you don't know, ask the teacher.

Write down the math problem and each step in the solution using math symbols. Next to each step, write down *in your own words* exactly what you are doing. It can be helpful to use a different colour of ink for this.

$$Y = 3x + 1$$

$$Y - 1 = 3x + 1 - 1$$

$$Y - 1 = 3x$$

$$Y - 1 - 3x = 3x - 3x$$

$$-3x + y - 1 = 0$$

$$-1(-3x + y - 1) = -1(0)$$

$$3x - y + 1 = 0$$

write equation in standard form, $3x - y + 1 = 0$

take 1 away from both sides

take $3x$ away from both sides

rearrange to be in standard form

multiply both sides by -1 to make the -3 positive

Another way to use colour is to use a different colour for every line in the solution. This is really useful if you have trouble following your own writing, or if your eyes drop down to the wrong lines when you are reading.

$$-8d - 12 = 14 - 5d + 1$$

$$-8d + 5d = 15 + 12$$

$$-3d = 27$$

$$d = -9$$

collect the like numbers

do the arithmetic

get the d alone by dividing out the -3

Write a *question mark* next to anything you don't understand. Ask the teacher to explain the parts where you have written your question marks. Don't just let it go, thinking that you will figure it out later. Many times, it doesn't happen.

Before you start your homework, *highlight in colour* the titles you have written in your notes. The highlighted information will help to give you the "big picture" of what you are doing.

Remember, do all homework problems, not just some of them! You can't guess which questions will be checked or taken up! And, you'll get valuable practice to boot.

Give yourself lots of room to write the equations on your paper. Drop down a line for every step, and write as neatly as you can. Leave a blank line between questions. If you are worried about wasting paper, divide your page into two columns, and put an equation in each column.

When you are studying, you will thank yourself for being tidy. It is very hard to read messy work, and your brain will give up long before it should!

