



How to Study as a Mathematics Degree

By Lara Alcock

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Every year, thousands of students go to university to study mathematics (single honours or combined with another subject). Many of these students are extremely intelligent and hardworking, but even the best will, at some point, struggle with the demands of making the transition to advanced mathematics. Some have difficulty adjusting to independent study and to learning from lectures. Other struggles, however, are more fundamental: the mathematics shifts in focus from calculation to proof, so students are expected to interact with it in different ways. These changes need not be mysterious - mathematics education research has revealed many insights into the adjustments that are necessary - but they are not obvious and they do need explaining.

This no-nonsense book translates these research-based insights into practical advice for a student audience. It covers every aspect of studying for a mathematics degree, from the most abstract intellectual challenges to the everyday business of interacting with lecturers and making good use of study time. Part 1 provides an in-depth discussion of advanced mathematical thinking, and explains how a student will need to adapt and extend their existing skills in order to develop a good understanding of undergraduate mathematics. Part 2 covers study skills as these relate to the demands of a mathematics degree. It suggests practical approaches to learning from lectures and to studying for examinations while also allowing time for a fulfilling all-round university experience.

The first subject-specific guide for students, this friendly, practical text will be essential reading for anyone studying mathematics at university.

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Review

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"Making the transition from school-level to University-level mathematics is hard, in terms of the complexity of the subject matter, the rigour of thought, and the need to be able to study much more independently. This excellent and wide-ranging book engages with all these issues and more, giving a very helpful insight into what is coming for beginning undergraduates in mathematics or mathematics-related disciplines. I just wish this book had been available in my day!" --Dr Geoff Tennant, Senior Lecturer in Mathematics Education, Institute of Education, University of Reading, UK

About the Author

Lara Alcock is a Senior Lecturer in the Mathematics Education Centre at Loughborough University. She studied mathematics to masters level at the University of Warwick, before going on to doctoral study in mathematics education at the same Institution. Prior to her present position, she spent four years as an Assistant Professor in Mathematics and the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University in the USA, and two as a Teaching Fellow in Mathematics at the University of Essex in the UK. In her current role she teaches undergraduate mathematics, works with PhD students in mathematics education, and conducts research studies on the ways in which people learn, understand and think about abstract mathematics.

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