

Steps for Math Problem-Solving

- 1) Find what the problem is asking for – underline or box it.
Draw a diagram if it helps. Annotate!
 - Take an **inventory** – what types of information do you see?
 - Look for **patterns** - what can you do with the information?
 - **Simplify, simplify, simplify!**
 - Repeat these steps if necessary
 - **Decide** within 30 seconds whether to continue or to skip.
 - If you're doing complex and time-consuming arithmetic, you're probably doing the wrong thing.
- 2) Solve it if you can. You should be able to solve most problems in 30 – 60 seconds.
OR
- 3) Plug in one or more possible (“test”) values.
OR
- 4) Write down the list of possible choices.
OR
- 5) Plug in each of the answers.
OR
- 6) Skip the problem if no approach looks useful. Annotate!
OR
- 7) At the end the test section, guess on all remaining problems.
There is no penalty for guessing.

Think about working the math sections in two passes.

- First pass: do the easy ones
- Second pass: do the ones you marked as “possible”
- Don't get “stuck” – spending minutes on tough problems that you never complete.