Practice and P. Sets: Preparing for Your First College Exam

Nick Hanford, PhD
Director of Quantitative Skills Programs
Nick’s Three Big Points:

1. Find your collaborators
2. Develop your problem set routine
3. Your brain changes as you practice
What is a Quantitative Skills Director?

I’m here to help you achieve your academic goals in quantitative-heavy courses!

- Quantitative Course Selection
- Academic Coaching
- Oversees the following programs:
  - Math and Science Resource Center
  - Economics Resource Center
  - Individual Content Tutoring
  - Peer Quantitative Coaches
What is a Quantitative and Formal Reasoning Course?

- Has a Q next to it in the course catalog
- Focuses on the development of quantitative skills
- Often use problem sets, AKA P.Sets, for the majority of assignments
What is a P. Set?

- Regular course assignment – may be due once a week, several times a week, every other week, etc.
- Call on information from class in different and challenging ways.
- Will likely take several hours to complete per week.
- Provides material for you to use to study!
P.Set Productivity

- **Find your collaborators**
  - Collaboration is often expected–ask your faculty during the first class about their thoughts!
    - Office hours
    - TA hours
    - Study group
    - Tutor sessions

- Try them all! See what feels right for the class/material.

- *Develop YOUR problem set routine*
Why Should I Practice?

- Neuroplasticity and strengthening connections
- Have the ability to ask questions of professors, TAs, tutors, and friends if you practice regularly instead of cramming
- Lowers stress heading into exam weeks
College vs. High School Exams

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

- **Create**: Use Existing Information to make something new
  - Invent, Develop, Design, Compose, Generate, Construct
- **Evaluate**: Make judgments based on sound analysis
  - Assess, Judge, Defend, Prioritize, Critique, Recommend
- **Analyze**: Explore relationships, causes, and connections
  - Compare, Contrast, Categorize, Organize, Distinguish
- **Apply**: Use existing knowledge in new contexts
  - Practice, Calculate, Implement, Operate, Use, Illustrate
- **Understand**: Grasp the meaning of something
  - Explain, Paraphrase, Report, Describe, Summarize
- **Remember**: Retain and recall information
  - Reiterate, Memorize, Duplicate, Repeat, Identify

College

High School
How do I practice?

- Review after class
- Problem sets
  - Change variables, switch things around, come up with new questions
- Study groups
  - Teach each other concepts
- Paraphrasing and correcting your notes
- Textbook questions
When do I practice?

- Find the right process for you
- Regular, short study session are great!
  - 20-30 minutes
  - Focused activity
    - Concept mapping
    - Flashcards
    - Correct notes
    - Predict exam questions
  - Better (and more fun) with a group!
- Start developing your exam review plans early!

bit.ly/willstudystrats
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Tutoring services open on Monday, September 11

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