

The Calculus Placement Test

Overview

Calculus is an important course for many students, but it can be a very challenging course. It requires hard work and commitment for the entire semester. But hard work cannot make up for inadequate preparation.

Calculus, like most of mathematics, is a cumulative discipline; each new idea depends on a thorough understanding of the preceding material. This is true all through the Calculus sequence, including the very beginning: Students who do not have a solid background in algebra and trigonometry will have serious trouble in Calculus. The Placement Test is designed to identify such students, and it has proved to be quite accurate.

Students who do not pass this test are unlikely to succeed in Calculus. To ensure greater student success in the calculus classroom all students who want to take Math 220, Math 223 (Intro to Calculus), or Math 224 (Differential Calculus) are required to take the placement exam. Their score on the test will determine whether they are allowed to take these courses. If a student's score is not high enough to take Math 220, Math 223, or Math 224 then they encouraged to take our Precalculus course (Math 108) to improve their background in algebra and trigonometry. Students who do so have a much better chance of success in Math 220, Math 223, or Math 224.

Test format

There are **two versions of the test, one for students registering for Business Calculus (Math 220) and one for students registering for Calculus (Math 223 or Math 224)**. Please make sure to take the correct placement exam for the course you will be taking at your appointment. You have an hour to take the test. It is administered by computer, under supervision. The questions are all multiple choice. Students may use pencil and paper for scratch work, but may not use calculators of any kind. When the student completes the exam, the exam score will appear on the computer screen.

The test has 33 questions. Each correct answer on the test counts as one point. **The passing grade is currently 26 for Math 220 and Math 224, and 23 for Math 223.**

For all three courses, an adequate score on a Placement Test is an absolute requirement. You may register for a course before passing a Placement Test, but, at the end of the first week of classes, all students who have not fulfilled the Placement Test requirement will be disenrolled. In that case you are encouraged to take our Precalculus course (Math 108) to improve your background in algebra and trigonometry. Students who do so have a much better chance of success in Math 220, Math 223, or Math 224.

If you have a disability with documented accommodations from the Services for Students with Disabilities office and have contacted SSD and received permission for an alternate exam then select the "Accommodated Students" option when registering for your exam Here. Only those students will be granted access to an extended time exam.

Test topics

The topics covered on the test are standard topics in precalculus mathematics, and, at a minimum, will include:

- Algebraic operations with fractions, radicals and exponents.

- Manipulation, graphing and solution of linear and quadratic equations.
- Simple geometry, including circles and triangles.
- Basic trigonometry, including identities.
- Inequalities, including absolute value expressions.
- Sets and functions.

Most standard precalculus texts cover this material in great detail, and students should find such a text and use it for review. Notice that calculators are not permitted during the test (and, indeed, calculators are prohibited in almost all mathematics tests at Binghamton). Therefore a precalculus text that places heavy emphasis on calculator use will not be a good review text for this test.

Schedule

[Click here](#) to view the placement test schedule.

You have up to two tries on the Placement Test during any three month period, and you can take at most 1 exam per day. We keep your highest score. If you took and passed the Calculus Placement Test when it was offered for the previous semester then you do not need to take it again.

Questions and Answers

Check [this link](#) if you have questions about the Placement Test.

The Number 1 question that students ask about the Placement Test is **“Do I have to take it?”** The answer is

If you enroll in Math 224, Math 223, or Math 220, then yes, you must pass the calculus placement test. The placement test is not required for other math courses. You must have passed the test before the end of the first week of classes. There are no exceptions. If you have other questions, check the [FAQ](#).

The Self-evaluation Test

You can get a very good idea of what the Placement Test looks like by taking our Self-evaluation Test. This is a version of the Placement Test that is designed for students to take at home. If you take the Self-evaluation seriously (without assistance, calculators, etc) and do well on it then you should have no problems when you take the Placement Test.

The Self-evaluation is not the Placement Test. Your score on the Self-evaluation is only intended to give you an idea of how you will do on the Placement Test. A passing score on the Self-evaluation does not qualify you to take Math 224, Math 223, or Math 220. You must pass the Placement Test if you want to take Math 224, Math 223 or Math 220.

The Self-evaluation has 33 questions and you have one hour to take it. You can only take it once. Please make sure that you choose the correct Self-evaluation for the course that you plan on registering for. One is for students taking Math 220 and the other is for students taking Math 223 or Math 224.

Click here to take the Self-evaluation Test.

Improving your Precalculus Skills

We highly recommend that you take our free online “Mathematics Needed for Calculus” Workshop in the summer (July 21 - Aug 12). If you get a high enough grade in the Math Workshop then you will be allowed to take Math 223, Math 220, or Math 224 without having to take the Placement Exam. All info about the Math Workshop is here: <https://www.binghamton.edu/harpur/student/summer-workshop.html>

Many students take our Precalculus course (Math 108) and go on to be successful in Calculus. If you don't get the Placement Test score you need, you are encouraged to take our Precalculus course (Math 108) to improve your background in algebra and trigonometry. Another option is to take a Precalculus course over the summer at a college near home. If you want to review before taking the test, you can find a few resources [on this page](#).

If taking a Precalculus course is not an option, one online option for reviewing Precalculus is ALEKS. This is an automated system to pinpoint your weaknesses and get appropriate review questions. You can pick “Precalculus” for college readiness under the Specialized section or “Precalculus & Intermediate Algebra and Precalculus” under the mathematics section. Keep in mind that ALEKS is a tool for review, not a teacher. If you need help understanding the material, then you need a Precalculus class, or at least a tutor.

Even if you pass a Placement Test with a low passing grade, you might want to consider strengthening your Precalculus skills before going into Calculus. Algebra, geometry, and trigonometry get used nonstop in Calculus, and getting thoroughly comfortable with these topics will pay off enormously.

From:
<http://www2.math.binghamton.edu/> - **Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Binghamton University**

Permanent link:
<http://www2.math.binghamton.edu/p/calculus/placementtest/start>

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