

Frequently Asked Questions about the MPT (Math Placement Test) *(last updated on 2016 Dec 27)*

(Q1) Where is the Math Placement Test main web page?

(A1) <http://math.usask.ca/placement>

(Q2) Where is the *Sample Math Placement Test* main web page?

(A2) http://math.usask.ca/sample_placement

(Q3) Who needs to write the MPT?

(A3) All students registered in Math 110/121/123/125 (which are *introductory calculus* courses) are *required* to write the Math Placement Test (MPT). Students who skipped the MPT without permission from the Department Head of Math & Stats may be dropped from the course or have their calculus grade withheld.

(Q4) What is the MPT? What is the test format? How long is the test? How many questions are there?

(A4) It is a mandatory basic skills assessment for students enrolled in Math 110/121/123/125 that we have been running since May 2007. As explained on the MPT main page (<http://math.usask.ca/placement>), the test consists of *thirty multiple-choice questions* to be completed in *70 minutes*, precisely timed by the computer. It is *closed-book* and *closed-notes*, and *calculators are not allowed*. The test is designed to assess competency on basic math skills expected of high school graduates, and to determine whether the student has the necessary prerequisites for succeeding in introductory calculus courses.

(Q5) I have been out of high-school for a number of years, and my math skills are “rusty”. May I be excused from the MPT?

(A5) No, all students registered in Math 110/121/123/125 are required to write the MPT. “Rusty” math skills are one of the main reasons why the Math Placement Test was developed—to assess and inform students whether they have retained enough of the necessary basic math skills to succeed in calculus.

(Q6) Since the MPT (Math Placement Test) is online, can I write the test at home?

(A6) No, you cannot write the MPT at home. Conflating the meaning of the word “online” with that of the phrase “accessible from home” seems to be a common mistake. The Math Placement Test is a *formal* assessment, and as such, the test is delivered only at designated times and in designated locations on the U of S Campus under supervision by test invigilators from the Department of Math & Stats. The MPT is *not* a test taken at home. On the other hand, the *Sample Test* (http://math.usask.ca/sample_placement) is an *informal* assessment and learning tool for students to practise on question types and topics that are similar to those on the actual test. We recommend students visit the Sample Test from home, and practise on it often before the actual test.

(Q7) I completed my Math B30 and Math C30 (or ALG 30 and GEO-TRIG 30) (or a similar calculus course at such-and-such university) with grades of 90% or above. Do I still have to write the MPT?

(A7) Yes, the test is *mandatory* for all students who are registered in Math 110/121/123/125 *irrespective* of what math courses they had taken in high school or elsewhere or how they performed in those outside courses. As long as the student's name appears on one of the rosters of Math 110/121/123/125, the student must **write** the MPT unless the student had already scored 60% or higher on the MPT within the last 12 months. Also see answer to Q21, Q22 and Q23.

(Q8) What test dates are available?

(A8) Students enrolled in Math 110/121/123/125 for Term 1 (Sep-Dec) must write the test in July, August or the first two weeks of September. Students enrolled in Math 110 for Term 2 (Jan-Apr) normally would write it in the first week of January (also see related answers to Q17 and Q26).

For 2016-2017 Term 1:

second week of July: 2016 July 7 & 9

first week of August: 2016 August 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

first two weeks of September (subject to change):

Math 110: 2016 Aug 30, Aug 31, Sep 02

Math 121: 2016 Sep 01, Sep 02

Math 123: 2016 Sep 06, Sep 07, Sep 08

Math 125: 2016 Sep 06, Sep 07, Sep 08

For 2016-2017 Term 2: 2017 January 3rd and January 4th

We will update the MPT main page (<http://math.usask.ca/placement>) as soon as times and locations have been finalized.

(Q9) Can I write the MPT in September instead of July or August?

(A9) Students are advised to write the MPT as early as possible (in July or August) in order to maximize their opportunities for academic advising and for making up any deficiencies in their background preparation. If you live outside of Saskatoon for the summer, or if you have a time conflict (say, with your summer school or job), please see the answers to Q10 and Q11 below.

(Q10) I live outside of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (or I am an international student currently outside of Canada), and I cannot afford to travel to Saskatoon for just one day to take the test early. Can I write it when I arrive in Saskatoon in September?

(A10) Yes, students who live outside of Saskatoon or have a time conflict (for example, with summer school or summer jobs) have automatic permission to write the MPT in September.

(Q11) I live in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, but my summer class or job hours conflict with all the available time slots in the summer. Can I write the test in September?

(A11) Please note that *some* test sessions in the summer are being offered on a *Saturday*. Students who have a time conflict (say, with summer school or summer jobs) have automatic permission to write the test in September.

(Q12) Where do I sign up to write the July or August MPT?

(A12) Please go to the MPT main page (<http://math.usask.ca/placement>) and read the instructions on how to sign up for a seat. We will update the MPT main page (<http://math.usask.ca/placement>) as soon as times and locations have been finalized.

(Q13) Can I see a list of July time slots for writing the MPT?

(A13) Here is a list summarizing the start times for the time-slots in July 2016:

Computers-provided-in-computer-lab Sessions:

Thu July 07, 2016: 10:00am; 11:30am; 01:00pm

Bring-your-own-portable-computer Session:

Sat July 09, 2016: 10:00am; 01:00pm

(Q14) When do I sign up to write the July MPT?

(A14) The plan is to open *online reservation* for the July time slots on *Thursday June 30th, 2016 at 8:30am*. Students who want to write the test in July should go to the Placement Test main page (<http://math.usask.ca/placement>), and follow the instructions there to sign up for a seat. After July 6th, new reservations or changes to an existing reservation for a July time slot can only be made in the evening between 5:00PM and 11:59PM. The machine will not permit students to remove a lapsed reservation.

(Q15) Can I see a list of August time slots for writing the MPT?

(A15) Here is a list summarizing the start times for the time-slots in August 2016:

Computers-provided-in-computer-lab Sessions:

Tue August 02, 2016: 10:00am; 11:30am; 01:00pm

Thu August 04, 2016: 10:00am; 11:30am; 01:00pm

Bring-your-own-portable-computer Sessions:

Wed August 03, 2016: -----; 01:00pm

Fri August 05, 2016: 10:00am; 01:00pm

Sat August 06, 2016: 10:00am; 01:00pm

(Q16) When do I sign up to write the August MPT?

(A16) *Online reservation* for the August time slots will open on *Monday July 25th, 2016 at 8:30am*. Students who want to write the test in August should go to the Placement Test main page (<http://math.usask.ca/placement>), and follow the instructions there to sign up for a seat. After August 1st, new reservations or changes to an existing reservation for an August time slot can only be made in the evening between 5:00PM and 11:59PM. The machine will not permit students to remove a lapsed reservation.

(Q17) What are the test dates and times for the September and January MPTs, and when do I sign up?

(A17) September and January test dates and times will be announced on the Placement Test main page when locations have been finalized. Signing up for the September MPTs usually occurs in the last two weeks of August. Signing up for the January MPT usually occurs in the last week of December and the first week of January. See also Q8 and Q26.

(Q18) I have trouble signing onto the MPT server to reserve a time slot. Can you help me?

(A18) Note that your PAWS credentials will NOT sign you on to the MPT server because the MPT server is NOT PAWS. Please read the "**How To Reserve a Time Slot**" pictorial guide especially **Slide Number 5** located at:

http://math.usask.ca/placement/how_to_reserve_a_time_slot_pictorial_guide_2016.pdf

Email "mpt@math.usask.ca" for further help if you still have trouble signing on to the MPT after reading that pictorial guide.

(Q19) Will we be allowed to use scrap paper for doing rough work during the test?

(A19) Yes, scrap papers for doing rough work will be provided. Remember to bring a pencil or a pen for doing rough work. But the answers to all questions must be submitted online during the test.

(Q20) I'm enrolled in Math 110 at a branch campus location outside the Saskatoon campus (for example, Muenster or Prince Albert) or I live close to a branch campus outside Saskatoon. Is the July and August MPTs available at these branch locations?

(A20) Not likely in July. But delivering the August MPT at some branch locations is a possibility if there is enough interest. It will depend on student demand and available resources. Please email us (mpt@math.usask.ca) with the subject line "Request delivery of the MPT in Muenster or Prince Albert" so that we can gauge student needs. We will need at least 12 students per branch location. If it turns out that there is not enough demand, students taking Math 110/123 at these branch campus locations will write the MPT during their first week of classes in September at their branch campus location (as we had done in previous years). We usually run the September and January MPT at the Muenster campus during the first week of classes.

(Q21) What is a satisfactory score for the MPT? What should I do if I failed the MPT? (Please also read the answers to Q22 and Q23.)

(A21) 80% or above on the MPT is a satisfactory score. Students who scored below 60% on the MPT *should* review their basic math first *before* taking calculus. A score between 60% and 79% (inclusive) generally would mean that some *essential* skills might be lacking, and one should take a closer look at the *subject area test scores* to determine whether all areas tested or just some areas would need review—the primary areas tested being those parts of *arithmetic*, *algebra*, *geometry*, and *trigonometry* that are deemed essential for introductory calculus.

It is *important* for students to understand that all basic skills tested in the Placement Test (and the Sample Test) are essential for solving problems in calculus successfully. Even when a student has understood the calculus concepts needed for solving a problem at hand, lacking the needed basic skills to follow it through to the end is usually one of the top reasons why students struggle with calculus problems.

(Q22) I've failed the MPT. Now what?

(Q22a) Am I still allowed to take calculus (Math 110/121/123/125), or are you going to drop me from the calculus course?

(A22a)

For Math 110: We have been using the MPT (Math Placement Test) to place Math 110 students since September 2015. **Scoring 60% or higher on the MPT is an official prerequisite of Math 110.** Math 110 students who scored less than 60% on the MPT will ***not*** be allowed to continue with the course (unless they already have credits for Math 102/104). Students who scored below 60% on the MPT and without credits for Math 102/104 *must drop Math 110 and enroll in Math 102, or drop Math 110 and review their basic math skills on their own.*

For Math 121/123/125: For Math 121/123/125 students, we are still using the MPT scores this year (2016-2017) for *diagnostic* and *student advising* purposes only but ***not yet*** for actual "placement". But students must write the MPT. Please also see answers to Q21.

Students who skip the MPT without permission from the Department Head of Math & Stats and their academic advisor may be dropped from the calculus course or have their calculus course grade withheld.

(Q22b) I scored less than 60% on the MPT in July (or August) because I just had a bad day. Can I re-write the MPT in September?

(A22b) The MPT is a formal assessment. It is *not* a practice test. Since we started running the MPT in 2007, no student has ever been allowed to write the MPT more than once within a period of 3 months. Students who wrote the MPT in July/August/September may re-write the test in January, those who wrote the test in January may rewrite the test in May or in July, August or September, etc.

(Q23) My MPT is below 80%. What resources are available for me to review my basic math? (Also read the answers to Q21 and Q22.)

(A23) Those students who need to review their basic math skills are advised to check out the following pages on **Math 102 (Pre-calculus)** and the **Math Readiness Course** which offer structured reviews on basic skills needed for calculus:

http://math.usask.ca/sample_placement/about_math102.html

<http://www.usask.ca/ulc/math/mathreadiness>

In addition, if you no longer have access to your secondary school math textbooks, you may be able to locate many free resources on the Web of varying quality, some more useful than others. Email mpt@math.usask.ca if you need advice on online resources for reviewing basic math.

(Q24) Will I be penalized if I don't write the MPT?

(A24) **Yes**, students who skip the MPT without permission from the Department Head of Math & Stats and their academic advisor may be dropped from the calculus course or have their calculus course grade withheld. Please also read the answers to Q21, Q22, and Q23.

(Q25) I am registered in Math 110/121/123/125 for Term 1 (Sep-Dec). Why haven't I received your email about writing the Math Placement Test (MPT) like all my friends have?

(A25) One reason might be that you added the class in PAWS *after* we had extracted the class list upon which our broadcast Email was based. That Email would have been sent *only* to those students whose names appeared on the extracted list. We will repeat that email to newly enrolled students at regular intervals. If you are registered for Math 110/121/123/125 for Term 1 but you have not received any Email from us about the MPT, please Email us (mpt@math.usask.ca). Your name must be uploaded to the Math Placement Test Server before you can sign up to reserve a seat.

(Q26) I am registered in Math 110 for Term 2 (Jan-Apr). Why haven't I received your Email about writing the Math Placement Test like all my friends have? Is it because my friends are taking calculus in Term 1 (Sep-Dec) rather than Term 2 (Jan-Apr)?

(A26) Yes, we have only been emailing students who are registered in Term 1 calculus courses. Term 2 students normally write the MPT at the start of Term 2. But there are advantages if one writes the MPT early. If the test score indicates that the student would need a comprehensive review rather than just a brush up on a few topics, the student would have more options available (such as taking Math 102 or taking the Math Readiness Course in September, etc) before taking calculus.

So, if you plan to take calculus in Term 2 but you want to write the MPT early in July or August, please Email us (mpt@math.usask.ca) and request that your name be added to the July/August MPT. After that, you can then sign up and write the test early. Otherwise, sign up for the January test when the time comes. The sign up for the January test won't happen until late December or early January. Access the Math Placement Test main page towards the last week of December for the latest information regarding the January MPT.

(Q27) I have already obtained credits for Math 102 (or Math 104), and I am enrolled in Math 110. Do I still need to write the MPT (Math Placement Test)?

(A27) Yes, all students whose names are on the classlist of Math 110/121/123/125 must write the MPT unless the student had already passed our MPT at 60% or above within the last 12 months. If you have already obtained credits for Math 102/104, you have our permission to stay in Math 110 regardless of what your test score would be in the upcoming MPT, and we will NOT place you back to Math 102 even if you were to score below 60% on this upcoming MPT. But you must still ***write*** the MPT for statistical purposes. See also Q24.

(Q28) I have already obtained transfer credits for Math 110/121/123/125 from an external institution (for example, through AP Calculus or from another University). **But I would still like to take Math 110/121/123/125 (either for credit or for auditing). Do I still need to write the MPT?**

(A28) This answer is similar to A27. We simply go by the rosters of Math 110/121/123/125. Yes, all students whose names are on the rosters of Math 110/121/123/125 must write the MPT unless the student had already passed our MPT at 60% or above within the last 12 months. If you have already obtained external transfer credits for Math 110/121/123/125, you have our permission to stay in the calculus course regardless of what your test score would be in the upcoming MPT, and we will NOT place you back to Math 102 even if you were to score below 60% on this upcoming MPT. But you must still **write** the MPT for statistical purposes. See also Q24.

(Q29) What is the difference between Math 102 and Math 104?

(A29) Math 104 is not designed to help students review basic skills. Students who are in need of reviewing basic math skills (arithmetic, algebra, geometry and trigonometry, excluding calculus) should NOT take Math 104. Math 104—being *elementary* calculus—is calculus nonetheless, and all calculus will require some level of proficiency in basic skills that are assumed to be mastered during secondary school years. On the other hand, Math 102 (Precalculus) is especially designed to help students follow a structured review of basic pre-calculus skills. Students who need to review basic skills should take Math 102, not 104. For more information on Math 102, visit the following page: http://math.usask.ca/sample_placement/about_math102.html

(Q30) Where can I get more information?

(A30)

(a) Visit the *Math Placement Test* main page at: <http://math.usask.ca/placement>

(b) Read the "*How To Reserve a Time Slot*" pictorial guide provided on the Placement Test site: http://math.usask.ca/placement/how_to_reserve_a_time_slot_pictorial_guide_2016.pdf

(c) Visit the *Sample Placement Test* page at: http://math.usask.ca/sample_placement

(Q31) I still have more questions after reading these answers and the information on the Placement Test main page. Who can answer my questions?

(A31) Please email "mpt@math.usask.ca" for further questions with an appropriate subject line such as "Questions about the MPT".