

Frequently Asked Questions about the MPT (Math Placement Test) *(last updated on 2017 Jun 12)*

(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) as well as those seeking permission to enroll in Math 110 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 required by 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 a *mandatory* proficiency assessment of basic math skills 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. If a student is seeking permission to enroll in Math 110, or if 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) We will announce the test dates on the MPT main page (<http://math.usask.ca/placement>) as soon as times and locations have been finalized. Also see the answer to the Q9 below.

(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, August, September, January MPT?

(A12) Please go to the MPT main page (<http://math.usask.ca/placement>) and read the instructions on where and 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/August/September/January time slots for writing the MPT?

(A13) Available time slots will be displayed at the time when you sign up. Generally speaking, we try to provide the following time slots depending on availability of resources and history of level of needs: 10:00am; 11:30am; 01:00pm; 2:30pm. This means that **not** all these time slots are available on a particular day.

(Q14) When do I sign up to write the July/August/September/January MPT?

(A14) Generally speaking, *online reservation* will open approximately 7 days before the first day of a batch of MPTs.

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

(A15) Please refer to the answer to Q13 above.

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

(A16) Please refer to the answer to Q14 above.

(Q17) What are the test dates and times for the September and January MPT?

(A17) September and January test dates and times are usually still in-the-works during May and June, but test dates will be announced on the Placement Test site as soon as locations have been finalized. Signing up for the September MPTs usually occurs in the last week of August. Test dates for January will usually be announced in December. Please stay tuned to the MPT pages for updates.

(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 follow the illustrations—especially **Slide Number 5**—in the "**How To Reserve a Time Slot**" pictorial guide as an example:

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

Even though the times and dates on that pictorial guide may refer to some older test dates of a previous year, the entire sign up process remains the same. 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 MPT available at these branch locations in the summer?

(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 or January at their branch campus location (as we had done in previous years).

(Q21) What is a satisfactory score for the MPT? What does it mean 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) We have been testing students entering Math 110/121/123/125 since September 2007. Students who skip the MPT without permission from the Department Head of Math & Stats may be dropped from the calculus course or have their calculus course grade withheld.

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.** Students who scored below 60% on the MPT and without credits for Math 102/104 will ***not*** be admitted into the course; instead, they should *enroll in Math 102*, or *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 (2017-2018) for *diagnostic* and *student advising* purposes only but ***not yet*** for actual *placement*. So, have no fear, but try to do your best on the MPT. It will help you gauge how ready you are for calculus. We will still advise students who score below 60% on the MPT to review their basic skills first, but we will not drop them from Math 121/123/125 if they decide to take the course *at their own risk*. But students must write the MPT for statistical purposes. Please also see answers to Q21.

(Q22b) I scored less than 60% on the MPT in June (or 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 4 months. Students who wrote the MPT in June/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 June, 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 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 reminder 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 110/121 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 usually email Term 1 students to remind them about the MPT in the last week of June. Term 2 students normally write the MPT at the start of Term 2, and we only remind them in late December. 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 the test. 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 on the MPT, and we will NOT place you back to Math 102 even if you were to score below 60% on the 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 the student's 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 example illustration on "*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.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".