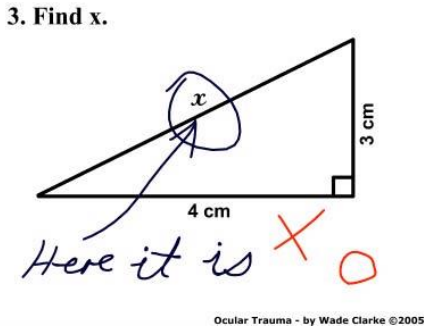
Avoiding Common Mistakes in GCSE Maths



Year after year, the students sitting **GCSE maths** exams drop valuable marks by silly mistakes. Read the tips below to help you to avoid this in your exam.

1. **Don't panic!** You will have been entered at the right level for your ability, so there is every reason to be confident of performing well in the examination.

2. **Read the questions properly.** Most marks are lost by not reading the questions properly. It is vital to read each question carefully and check you have understood it.

3. **Look for clues.** Look out for (and underline/circle) key words and facts (eg. 'NOT TO SCALE' – means there is no point in measuring a diagram) and decide on the important parts of the question (often, where the numbers are!)

4. **Show all your workings.** Gain all the possible marks by showing full workings. For the majority of questions, a certain number of marks are specifically allocated to the use of the proper method, with separate marks for a correct answer. By showing all formulas and calculations, it is possible to gain a significant percentage of the marks for a particular question, even though the final answer may be incorrect.

5. **Pace yourself.** Work steadily through the exam paper, avoiding spending too much time on any particular question. The marks awarded for each question are clearly shown. In a 2 hour exam, marked out of 100, each mark equates to 1.2 minutes, so, for example, a 5-mark question should be allocated 5 x 1.2 = 6 minutes.

6. **Complete the easy questions first**. If any question proves particularly difficult, put a mark by it and come back to it once the remainder of the paper is completed.

7. **Have a go!** Attempt ALL the questions on the paper. Clearly, if only three quarters of the questions are attempted, it is only possible to attain three quarters of the marks, at best. Even if a question looks particularly difficult, precious marks can be gained by attempting the more straightforward parts of the question. **REMEMBER YOU CAN GET MARKS FOR YOUR WORKING OUT.**

8. **Check your answers straight away**. Remember to check if you have answered the question fully. Have you rounded to two decimal places -if you have been asked to? Have you written the answer as a fraction – if you have been asked to?

9. **Give clear explanations**. In questions on transformations, gain all the marks available by describing any transformation FULLY, for example, "a 90° anticlockwise rotation about the origin" rather than merely "rotation". Also, make sure you refer to rules in angles questions. If you have worked out that a missing angle is 60 degrees because the triangle is an equilateral triangle so all angles are equal and all angles in a triangle add up to 180 degrees then don't forget to say that!

10. **Take care with graphs**. With questions involving diagrams, it is often helpful to add lines, especially for questions on geometry or graphs. Additionally, with graph questions, take special care as the scales on the x-axis (horizontal) and y-axis (vertical) may be different.

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