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How to Solve Simple Calculus Problems

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Note: Target audience is any one that is taking, or has taken at least an introductory course in calculus.

Calculus problems can be very challenging, but if you use the following simple steps you should breeze right through them. There are three main steps in the Simple Calculus Solution (SCS).

The most important thing to remember is that you are doing calculus, and consequently, you will need to differentiate. If you can remember that, half the battle is won. The other half is deciding what to take the derivative of. If you are ~~use~~ unsure, you can use this rule of thumb; when in doubt, differentiate everything.

Once you have obtained the derivative, you need to create some garbage. Garbage is the stuff between the derivative and the final answer. There are two ways to create garbage, forwards and backwards. If you are working out of a textbook, or something else that supplies an answer at the back, use the backwards method. Otherwise, you will need to go forwards.

For the backwards method, write the answer near the bottom of the page. If you are unsure how much space to leave, a good rule of thumb is to leave five times as much as the question takes up. Then work backwards, from the answer to the derivative. Use basic mathematical operators, and add a lot of unnecessary letters. Use only x, y, z, t, i, a, b, c, m, n, and j, these are math teachers' favourites and are referred to as the familiar eleven. Write the letters clearly, but write everything else illegibly. (ex. $x \times (3y) - t^2 5icm$)

If you use the familiar eleven, it gives the teacher a sense of security, and they tend to ~~see~~ agree with you whatever you have written. If you can make them agree with what you have written and they see you have the right answer, you should get full marks.

If you don't have the answer (like on a test) don't despair, there is still a way, you must work forwards. At first glance, this may seem the hard way, but actually, it is easier. Work exactly the same as before, but start at the derivative and work down. When you judge there is enough garble, write a very definite equals sign. This equals sign should stand out and scream, "Hey, you teacher, something important follows." Then scribble on a short ~~and~~ answer.

The last step is to write a final sentence. This should include legible ~~enough~~ english ~~and~~ with the scribbled final answer. If you don't feel your garble is convincing enough, you can strengthen ~~to~~ your solution by using the familiar eleven in your ~~and~~ answer. Words that ~~are~~ have only the ~~the~~ familiar eleven ~~are~~ ^{are} especially good. If you can work words like jix, yix, and tily into the sentence you may ^{even} receive bonus marks.

If you are struggling in calculus try using the SCS, you just may get a surprise.

- any advice for English?