

# Maths Anxiety

## Information Sheet

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### What is Maths Anxiety?

This area of mathematical resilience looks at whether a student feels anxious or stressed when asked to do maths.

Mathematical Anxiety is defined as "a feeling of tension, apprehension, or fear that interferes with maths performance", and some individuals who suffer from mathematical anxiety can even suffer a physical reaction to mathematics similar to that of pain. Maths anxiety can come from a variety of places such as parents and peers, the pressure to get a good or passing grade, or the pressure that a student puts themselves under to do well in maths. It is important to remember that everyone learns maths at a different pace – some students tend to forget this and try to keep up with their friends and classmates, which can lead to anxiety if they feel that they are falling behind.

Students who report having mathematical anxiety tend to underperform in mathematics activities as they are either concentrating on being worried about the task itself or are completely avoiding the activity as a natural reaction to avoid pain. Maths anxiety can materialise as some common avoidance strategies; such as guessing an answer when asked, copying homework, or not being willing to ask or answer questions; all of which can also be mistaken for laziness.

Many students worry about their performance in school and do feel anxious before taking an exam, however a large proportion of students admit to being particularly anxious about mathematics.

#### References:

Ashcraft, M. H., 2002. Math Anxiety: Personal, Educational, and Cognitive Consequences. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 11(5), pp. 181 - 185.

Lyons and Beilock, 2012, in OECD, 2013. *PISA 2012 Results: Ready to Learn: Students' Engagement, Drive and Self-Beliefs (Volume III)*.

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### Suggestions to improve your students' resilience score in this area

Focus on positive reinforcement when students are completing tasks in maths lessons. Ensure that students are encouraged to take risks safely in the classroom and at home and that they are praised when they do so.




Try to identify the cause of the anxiety in the student – does it come from a particular experience in the student's life that has continued to impact them? Students can inherit maths anxiety from parents, teachers, and others around them.

Give students time to answer questions and do not rush them – be patient. Students can feel under pressure to answer and may not want to which may increase their fear of failure. Do not surprise them with a question in front of the whole class – this can cause an increase in their feeling of anxiousness.

Encourage students to keep a record of positivity in maths lessons, to reflect on their own learning and to begin to confront their own attitudes towards maths. You can use the template on the second page or create your own if you prefer.

# Positive Maths Journal



Date	What went well today?	How did it feel?
 Five positive lessons so far! You can do it! 		
 Ten positive lessons! 