

The Top Six Reasons Why Mental Math is Important and Useful

6. Mental math methods are usually **faster** than technology, if you have an efficient strategy. For example, you can calculate that 25% of 80 is 20, in my head, faster than someone can pull out a calculator (or cell phone) and take $.25 \times 80$. The key is knowing that 25% is one-fourth, which means to divide by four—and one can divide by four by dividing by two twice.
5. Mental math is useful in **everyday life** and **technology** (and paper) **may not be available or appropriate**. Examples: Working in a concession stand calculate the total for a popcorn, Coke, and candy bar; Dividing the \$18 pizza bill between four people; Find sale price of clothing that is 30% off.
4. Mental math is useful to **check or estimate an answer obtained from a calculator** (or other technology or someone else or from a paper and pencil calculation). Did the order at the fast food restaurant get rung up correctly? Is the answer to the homework problem reasonable? Did you get the proper change at the concession stand?
3. Being able to do (at least some) math mentally leads to **fluency and confidence**. Make the comparison to someone who is fluent in a foreign language. If someone is fluent in Spanish, then they can carry on a conversation without stopping to look up words in a dictionary or taking long pauses to compose a sentence, but can combine various words and structures in the normal flow of conversation. Similarly, when solving a math problem, it flows better if you can proceed using your head rather than dancing fingers on a keypad or thumbing through a book. *Fluency happens in the mind*. No matter what the activity, confidence helps one be successful.
2. **It will be on the test**. Tests will contain *no calculator* portions. Students will be expected to use mental math and paper-and-pencil methods.

...and the Number One reason Why Mental Math is Important and Useful is....
1. Mental math methods **help you understand mathematics**. This makes homework and the learning new concepts easier. *Understanding occurs in the mind*. Increased understanding leads to less frustration, success, and higher grades.