



Evidence-based resources for home-supported learning

# Tips for reducing mathematics anxiety

**Mathematics anxiety can have a large, detrimental impact on students' learning.**

## Approach summary

Mathematics anxiety is a particular type of anxiety which can overload a students' working memory, causing them to avoid mathematics and their learning to slow.

While there is a growing understanding of the occurrence of mathematics anxiety, there is much less available on the ways to reduce it. We do know that mathematics anxiety appears to increase as students age.

Motivation, one of the domains of self-regulated learning, is likely to play a part in how anxious a student is when presented with a challenge in mathematics. It is complex, and motivation may be impacted by beliefs ('*I am a maths person*' or '*I am not a maths person*'), an understanding of the usefulness of mathematics, or just a general inclination to like or dislike mathematics.

It will probably be more difficult during home-supported learning for teachers to identify students who are suffering from mathematics anxiety. Teachers are encouraged to use data available to begin identifying students who may have greater difficulty adjusting to mathematics learning at home. Knowing your students to predict and observe heightened anxiety is the best starting point for a teacher.

## Tips

- Be on the look-out for students who may be less confident with mathematics in home-supported learning.
- Share suggestions with school staff and parents about using positive language when speaking about mathematics, such as by modelling metacognitive talk '*I found that difficult at first, but then I tried another strategy*'.
- Challenge the misconception that some people 'just aren't good at mathematics' to encourage greater resilience.
- Knowing students well is likely to be the biggest advantage teachers have in addressing mathematics anxiety.
- Building [metacognition and self-regulation](#) in learners might enable students to approach maths learning with greater confidence.

## What should I consider?

- Have I planned to check in with students regularly which could be an opportunity to identify mathematics anxiety developing during this period?
- How will I understand whether this is related to mathematics or perhaps increased anxiety due to other changes occurring for the student?
- How can I use what I know about a student and their mathematics learning to encourage them to open up to me about potential issues and how they're feeling about mathematics?
- Are there tips I can provide to parents to reduce mathematics anxiety?

This resource has been developed from our Guidance Report [Improving mathematics in upper primary and lower secondary](#).