



# Math Doesn't Suck: How to Survive Middle-School Math Without Losing Your Mind or Breaking a Nail

*Danica McKellar*

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**Math Doesn't Suck: How to Survive Middle-School Math Without Losing Your Mind or Breaking a Nail** Danica McKellar

**From a well-known actress and math genius—a groundbreaking guide to mathematics for middle school girls, their parents, and educators**

As the math education crisis in this country continues to make headlines, research continues to prove that it is in middle school when math scores begin to drop—especially for girls—in large part due to the relentless social conditioning that tells girls they “can't do” math, and that math is “uncool.” Young girls today need strong female role models to embrace the idea that it's okay to be smart—in fact, it's sexy to be smart!

It's Danica McKellar's mission to be this role model, and demonstrate on a large scale that *math doesn't suck*. In this fun and accessible guide, McKellar—dubbed a “math superstar” by *The New York Times*—gives girls and their parents the tools they need to master the math concepts that confuse middle-schoolers most, including fractions, percentages, pre-algebra, and more. The book features hip, real-world examples, step-by-step instruction, and engaging stories of Danica's own childhood struggles in math (and stardom). In addition, borrowing from the style of today's teen magazines, it even includes a Math Horoscope section, Math Personality Quizzes, and Real-Life Testimonials—ultimately revealing why math is easier and cooler than readers think.

## Math Doesn't Suck: How to Survive Middle-School Math Without Losing Your Mind or Breaking a Nail Details

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## **From Reader Review Math Doesn't Suck: How to Survive Middle-School Math Without Losing Your Mind or Breaking a Nail for online ebook**

### **Susan says**

Based on the covers of Danica McKellar's books - glamorous author and goofy names - I never would have picked them up, although I suppose the point is to appeal to teen girls, not their middle-aged mothers. When I learned that McKellar is an award-winning scientist/mathematician with a theorem named after her, I looked twice.

I love this book! It explains concepts in several different ways so if you or your child don't understand one explanation, you can move to another one. It also has lots of shortcuts and tips that make math easier. Scattered throughout all her math books are vignettes about women who have exciting jobs that use math, how to deal with test anxiety, and why being smart is cool.

There are not many practice problems in this book. The author did this on purpose - she states in the introduction that there are lots of resources for more problems. This book is more of an explanation of how math works. There are a small number of problems - about 5 - in each section. What I do with my daughter is have her to the problems in the book. If she does them with no trouble, we move on to the next section. If she has trouble, I find problems on the topic in other math books for her to practice.

The style is breezy and chatty, and might get annoying to adults or serious math students after a while. It is also very much oriented to girls, which in one sense is good because it makes girls feel comfortable with math and holds their interest. On the other hand, her tips and approaches would be useful for all students, so parents and teachers may want to use the ideas to help all students even if boys wouldn't be caught dead reading it themselves.

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### **Heather Wade says**

As a middle school math teacher, I would recommend this book to a very select group of girls. You should really know a student before recommending this book. Recommend it to the wrong student and I think they could be very offended. This is only for the girly girl. As a not so girly girl myself, I was a little offended at how girly the book actually was. But, after I got past the girly-ness, the book does have great real-world examples that I might use in my classroom after a bit of "tweaking."

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### **Shannon says**

This book helped me so much! I did well on my college placement test and I give lots of the credit to this book. The way she teaches stuck in my mind. No doubt I do have to work on a couple of areas in math but there was no way I would have been able to do as well as I did without having consulted this book. I am definitely considering getting the other 2 books she has written. Just in case I need more refreshing, I would definitely recommend this book to someone who has been out of school for more than a couple years and

needs a refresher. Lots of little hints and shortcuts too. My son also helped me and between this book and his brains I was able to accomplish my goal.

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### **StanleyX\_C2 says**

This book was interesting... I thought it was going to be full of math, but yet it included many stories about real life. It taught me to be careful in life with money... This character basically went from poor to rich and rich to poor within months. And the cycle continues. I enjoy the author's writings. I feel impressed that this author could connect so many math rules to real life. However, I didn't really enjoy the book's story. This book is really just like your parent scolding you about your future.

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### **Mary says**

I wish I had found this book when I was still teaching math to fifth-graders. Though most of the stuff is pretty basic (for teachers), McKeller did give me a couple of new ways of explaining concepts to kids that I would have used in my teaching. This book seems like it would also be good for struggling math students, though I would expect they would resist reading it because of their difficulties.

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### **Devon says**

I love this book! I recommend it to anyone that needs a little reminder of how to do some middle school math. I had to do some math homework over the summer to review certain topics before i skipped a grade. When i got stuck, i cracked open this book, turned to a certain chapter, and suddenly i understood perfectly what my homework wanted me to do! I love it! Danica ties middle school drama into perfect math situations. You can really understand how to do the work. I'm in algebra, and this book is totally helping.

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### **Serena Prieto says**

Got this book in grade 6 and used it all the way through college! I'm not a girly girl but it was immensely helpful for me, both mathematically and when it came to explaining concepts to my scribes. (I'm disabled and can't write.) I would use it to show them how to show my work. Great book! Danica McKellar has found a need and filled it.

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### **Jada says**

While part of me is a good bit disturbed by all of the "girly-ness" (and my junior high self would be completely insulted), I would, and likely will, promote this book. It is a fact that many girls (and boys as well) are all tied up in the world that they are told is supposed to be theirs - makeup, celebrities, shopping, waxing(?!), etc. I think this book could do a nice job of reaching those girls who could care less for something if it didn't involve these things.

McKellar draws girls in with the usual, then she actually talks about some worthwhile things without sounding preachy, but like a friend. Sure she pushes the "smart is sexy, and you want to be sexy, right?" - but isn't it? But she also talks about what studying math can do for your own health and happiness. And her math is clear and fun, with relevant, up-to-date examples - it's playful and that's good for anyone learning math.

The horoscopes do irk me, but hopefully, if this book works, it's readers will develop a sense of logic and reason and eventually come to realize that horoscopes are a load of unfounded crap. Hopefully they'll even develop a sense of self without being told who they are.

Overall, I think this is a great book that could get and keep a lot of girls out there interested in math. I'm happy to see that all 20 out of 27 copies at 4 surrounding library systems are currently checked out.

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### **Jason says**

"Wonder (years) where Danica McKellar has been? Doing math!"

I haven't read this yet, but can't wait. Feel free to use the above for blurbs.

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### **Chris says**

A condescension to young women.

Grow up to be Joan Birman if you want, girls. She began her mathematical career AFTER raising 3 kids, then lit the world on fire with beauty.

<https://www.math.columbia.edu/~jb/my-...>

By the way, here is the paper McKellar famously coauthored. <http://danicamckellar.com/pdf/percola...> Knowledgeable opinion obviously ranks this far below Mirzkani, Birman, Starkston, and so on. (list of women mathematicians <https://qr.ae/TUn1yh>)

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### **Karen says**

I'm not a middle-school student by a long shot--I'm a woman in her late 20s with a lifelong fear of math--but found this book to be a refreshing refresher course. Is it silly? You betcha! Did I skip the quizzes and wince at some of the examples? Yes and yes. But it's also encouraging and it works. I read through the whole thing in a couple of days, will probably go back and do some of the "homework".

I have a recurring nightmare in which I haven't passed my high school math course and therefore my high school and college diplomas are void. The dream ends with me being forced to re-enroll in the 9th grade. Oh, the horror! I figured it was time to put an end to my irrational math phobia.

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## **Lisa says**

Ok, so like you've seen this drop-dead gorgeous dress at a boutique and it costs \$62. Well, you've only got \$50 bucks...what's a girl to do???

You wait 'til it goes on sale! Ok, so like the boutique is having a 1/5 off and no tax sale, yippee!! But do you have enough money to get the dress of your dreams?? Let's find out...

Danica McKellar uses practical stories like these to make math a necessity for living, even when you're a middle school girl. Her mathematic tips are easily explained.

We are talking basic math here...no stellar realizations that will land you AP math your freshman year...but Danica DOES take the stress out of doing math. Sprinkled throughout the book are pictures & stories of beautiful adult women at some swanky party who use math in their careers, but had some sort of awful math experience as girls. "Danica's Diary" entries also offer words of hope and advice for surviving math.

An easy quick read, with a good table of contents and index to help you get right to the section of math you are needing. Would be a great gift for a middle school girl.

Danica makes math fun, while building a girl's confidence at the same time. Basically, this star/math genius pulls off what she's trying to attempt here.

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## **Richard Gartee says**

I checked this book out from the library to preview it before buying it for my great-niece. This book is excellent at what it sets out to do, which is encourage young women to do well in math. Danica McKellar is not only a beautiful TV star but something of a math genius as well. This book talks about math problems using examples of fingernail polish, dresses, and relationships with boys. The math is solid and the writing will engage any middle school girl. She also has several tricks for quickly solving math problems, finding factors, etc. that even I didn't know. So an adult can learn something here as well. Unfortunately, I don't think you can get a math challenged boy to read this as it is so thoroughly inundated with examples intended to appeal to females. In addition to math, the book also gives girls practical advice on taking tests, reducing stress, healthy diet, and hydration.

Danica McKellar has written several more books introducing girls to pre-algebra, algebra, and geometry. Whether the girl in your life loves math already or hates it, she will enjoy this book and benefit from it.

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## **Kathrynn says**

I enjoyed reading this book and the humor that the author put into explaining math concepts. This book is definitely written for the female persuasion as most of the examples pertain to buying nail polish, shopping (sales and percents off), comparing boyfriends (finding greatest common factor), making beaded friendship bracelets (factoring), etc.

I found most of the material in 3/4 of this book 5th grade level math. Factoring, fractions, adding with common denominators, finding common denominators, multiplying (canceling), finding greatest common factor, etc., + - x / with decimals and percents

Only after Chapter 17 did I find new material for my 7th grader. There isn't any geometry in this book and that is where my 7th grader is in 7th grade math.

I did enjoy reading some of the memory tricks and believe they would be valuable for anyone (male/female) (teacher/student) struggling with math or teaching.

The book is well laid out, lots of examples and cuteness. There is a silly section on your "math horoscope" and that's all I'll say about that.

If anyone would like to know the other chapters or material covered, here they are:

**Part 1: Factors and Multiples Don't Suck**

Chapter 1, How to Make a Killing on eBay (prime #'s and prime factorization)

Chapter 2, Do you still have a crush on him? (greatest common factor)

Chapter 3, You can never have too many shoes (multiples and lowest common multiple)

**Part 2, Fractions Don't Suck**

Chapter 4, Everything you ever wanted to know about pizza but were afraid to ask (fractions)

Chapter 5, How many iced lattes can these actors drink? (x / fractions and reciprocals)

Chapter 6, When to seriously stop raiding the fridge (equivalent fractions and reducing)

Chapter 7, Is your sister trying to cheat you out of your fair share? (comparing fractions)

Chapter 8, How much do you and your best friend have in common (common denominators---+-)

Chapter 9, Choosing the perfect necklace (complex fractions)

**Part 3: Decimals Don't Suck**

Chapter 10, What every savvy shopper should know (decimals)

Chapter 11, Why Calculators would make terrible boyfriends

Chapter 12, How to entertain yourself while babysitting a devil child (converting decimals to fractions)

**Part 4: Percents join the party...and they don't suck either.**

Chapter 13, Sale of the century (converting percents to/from decimals and fractions)

Chapter 14, A choreographed performance (mixing fractions, decimals, and percents)

**Part 5, Word problem's don't suck**

Chapter 15, The universal language of love...and math (intro to word problems)

Chapter 16, Does she ever get off the phone? (ratios)

Chapter 17, The perks of a southern drawl (rates and unit rates)

Chapter 18, Filmmaker Extraordinaire (proportions)

Chapter 19, Are you drinking enough water? (unit conversions)

**Part 6, Even Algebra Doesn't Suck**

Chapter 20, Who's the cute new foreign exchange student? (intro to solving for x)

Chapter 21, Romeo and Juliet (intro to solving for x in word problems)

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**dg says**

i pretty much used all of danica mckellar's books as math textbooks in middle and high school. they were fun with all of the quizzes and interviews and incredibly informative

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