

GCSE ONLINE TUTORING

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PEARSON EDEXCEL GCSE (9-1) MATHEMATICS 1MA1

1MA1 COMMON MISTAKES & DIAGNOSTIC REPAIR HANDBOOK

Foundation + Higher | Pearson examiner-report evidence + specification-derived risk checks

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How to use this document

A correction handbook for use after mocks, topic tests and independent practice. Every entry separates Pearson examiner-report evidence from independently authored specification-risk diagnostics.

Section	What it gives you
Evidence policy	How ER and SPEC labels differ.
Foundation	Foundation report evidence and repair routines.
Higher	Higher report evidence and repair routines.
Cross-course	Accuracy, presentation, interpretation and checking.
References	Direct Pearson examiner reports and specification.

Reference tags such as [SPEC], [GB-2026] and [ER24H1] are defined in the source register so the factual basis can be audited.

Evidence policy

ER - Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Meaning: The issue is explicitly described in a Pearson Principal Examiner Feedback report in the public source set.

What it supports: It shows the misconception or difficulty occurred in real candidate responses in that paper/series.

What it does not support: It does not establish a five-year frequency or national percentage unless Pearson publishes that statistic.

Source: Pearson Principal Examiner Feedback reports

SPEC - specification-derived diagnostic risk

Meaning: An independently authored warning derived from the mathematical demand of a 1MA1 specification skill.

Use: Treat it as a diagnostic checklist, not as a Pearson claim about candidate frequency.

Source: [SPEC]

Foundation error and repair cards

F-01 | Units

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Dividing by 100 rather than 1000 when converting litres and millilitres.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Write a unit ladder and attach the unit to every intermediate value.

Rapid self-check: $1.7 \text{ L} = ? \text{ mL}$; explain why the multiplier is 1000.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER24F2

F-02 | Calculator use

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Using long written build-up methods on calculator papers, increasing error risk.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Use direct percentage multipliers and full calculator expressions; round only at the end.

Rapid self-check: Find 17.5% of 286 using one calculator expression.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER24F2

F-03 | Accuracy

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Premature rounding in a multi-step calculator problem.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Keep full calculator display until the final requested accuracy.

Rapid self-check: Compare a result rounded after every step with one rounded only at the end.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER24F2

F-04 | Presentation

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Working is unclear, contradictory or spread across the page.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: One method per line; cross out rejected methods; box the final answer.

Rapid self-check: Can another student reproduce your method from the page without asking you?

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER24F2

F-05 | Context problems

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Failing to extract key numerical information from long text.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Underline quantities, write what is being asked, then translate into a short calculation plan.

Rapid self-check: Turn a three-sentence word problem into a three-step calculation plan.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER24F3

F-06 | Written explanation

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Giving a numerical result where an explanation/justification is required.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Use a because-statement that names the mathematical fact and connects it to the conclusion.

Rapid self-check: Write one sentence justifying why a comparison is valid.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER24F3

F-07 | Fractions

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Giving a decimal when the question explicitly requires a fraction.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Read the required answer form before calculating and convert at the end if needed.

Rapid self-check: Write 0.375 as a fraction in simplest form.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER24F3

F-08 | Bounds

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Using the rounded value itself instead of the correct upper/lower bounds.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Convert stated accuracy into a half-unit interval before calculating.

Rapid self-check: A length is 8.2 cm to nearest 0.1 cm: write its error interval.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

F-09 | Ratio

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Adding ratio parts to original quantities without identifying what one part represents.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Find total parts, compute one part, then scale.

Rapid self-check: Share £84 in ratio 2:5.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

F-10 | Percentages

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Using additive change for repeated percentage growth/decay.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Use a multiplier for each period, or compound formula when appropriate.

Rapid self-check: Increase £500 by 4% for 3 years.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

F-11 | Probability

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Adding probabilities when the event requires multiplication, or vice versa.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Decide whether events are alternatives (add) or successive joint events (multiply), accounting for dependence.

Rapid self-check: Two independent events have probabilities 0.3 and 0.4: find both.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

F-12 | Statistics

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Comparing distributions using only one measure.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Compare both centre and spread, and support statements with values.

Rapid self-check: Compare two box plots using median and IQR/range.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

F-13 | Graphs

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Reading a graph without checking scale or units.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Mark the axis interval size before reading any coordinate/gradient.

Rapid self-check: If five small squares represent 20 units, what is one small square?

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and

practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

Higher error and repair cards

H-01 | Arithmetic

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Division and negative-number errors on the non-calculator paper.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Simplify fractions first; track signs explicitly; estimate sign/magnitude before finalising.

Rapid self-check: Without calculator, evaluate $-18 \div 3 + 7$ and check the sign.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER24H1

H-02 | Histograms

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Drawing/reading histograms without using frequency density.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Write frequency density = frequency/class width before constructing or reading bars.

Rapid self-check: A class width 5 has frequency 30. What is its density?

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER24H1

H-03 | Similarity

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Not recognising a similar-triangles route.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Mark equal angles, pair corresponding sides, then write one scale-factor equation.

Rapid self-check: Given two similar triangles, identify three corresponding side pairs before calculating.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and

practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER24H1

H-04 | Circle equation

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Not using $x^2 + y^2 = r^2$ for a circle centred at the origin.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Identify centre/radius, substitute the known point or tangent information, then solve.

Rapid self-check: What is the radius of $x^2 + y^2 = 49$?

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER24H1

H-05 | Fractions

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Using a common denominator incorrectly or making arithmetic errors after conversion.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Convert each fraction carefully and simplify before operating.

Rapid self-check: Compute $2\frac{1}{3} - 1\frac{4}{5}$ exactly.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER24H1

H-06 | Indices

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Incorrectly combining powers or coefficients when multiplying algebraic terms.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Separate coefficient arithmetic from index laws: multiply coefficients, add powers of the same base.

Rapid self-check: Simplify $3x^4 \times 5x^2$.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and

practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER23H3

H-07 | Algebraic simplification

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Correct expansion followed by an invalid attempt to combine unlike terms.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: After expanding, only collect terms with identical variable parts.

Rapid self-check: Can $7p^5 + 9p^4$ be combined? Explain.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER23H3

H-08 | Inverse proportion

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Treating inverse proportion like direct proportion.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Write $y=k/x$ (or relevant power) immediately and find k from one known pair.

Rapid self-check: If $y \propto 1/x$ and $y=6$ when $x=4$, find y when $x=8$.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER23H3

H-09 | Algebraic proof

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Giving examples instead of a general algebraic argument.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Represent the integer/sequence algebraically and transform to the required form.

Rapid self-check: Prove the sum of two consecutive integers is odd using n .

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER23H3

H-10 | Factorisation

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Stopping after taking out a common factor when further factorisation is required.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Check whether the remaining bracket is itself factorisable.

Rapid self-check: Fully factorise $2x^2-18$.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER23H3

H-11 | Vectors

Evidence status: Pearson examiner-report evidenced

Typical weak response / misconception: Treating vector paths as lengths rather than directed quantities.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Write each path as an ordered vector sum and simplify coefficients before comparing.

Rapid self-check: Express AC using $AB=a$ and $BC=b$.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: ER23H3

H-12 | Bounds

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Using the rounded value itself instead of the correct upper/lower bounds.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Convert stated accuracy into a half-unit interval before calculating.

Rapid self-check: A length is 8.2 cm to nearest 0.1 cm: write its error interval.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

H-13 | Ratio

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Adding ratio parts to original quantities without identifying what one part represents.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Find total parts, compute one part, then scale.

Rapid self-check: Share £84 in ratio 2:5.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

H-14 | Percentages

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Using additive change for repeated percentage growth/decay.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Use a multiplier for each period, or compound formula when appropriate.

Rapid self-check: Increase £500 by 4% for 3 years.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

H-15 | Probability

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Adding probabilities when the event requires multiplication, or vice versa.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Decide whether events are alternatives (add) or successive joint events (multiply), accounting for dependence.

Rapid self-check: Two independent events have probabilities 0.3 and 0.4: find both.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

H-16 | Quadratics

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Using the quadratic formula with sign/substitution errors.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Write a,b,c first, including signs, then substitute with brackets.

Rapid self-check: For $x^2-5x-6=0$, list a,b,c before solving.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

H-17 | Trigonometry

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Choosing a right-angle trig ratio in a non-right-angled triangle.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Classify the triangle first; use sine/cosine rule only when their conditions are met.

Rapid self-check: What rule is appropriate with two sides and included angle?

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

H-18 | Circle theorems

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Stating an angle answer without naming the theorem.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Write theorem -> substitution -> conclusion.

Rapid self-check: State the theorem relating a radius and tangent.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

H-19 | Iteration

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Ignoring convergence/required accuracy and quoting an iterate too early.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Generate successive values until the required rounded value is stable.

Rapid self-check: What evidence shows a 3 d.p. iterative answer is stable?

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

H-20 | Statistics

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Comparing distributions using only one measure.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Compare both centre and spread, and support statements with values.

Rapid self-check: Compare two box plots using median and IQR/range.

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

H-21 | Graphs

Evidence status: Specification-derived diagnostic risk

Typical weak response / misconception: Reading a graph without checking scale or units.

Why marks are lost: The response applies an incorrect relationship, loses accuracy/units, or fails to communicate enough valid reasoning for the mark scheme to credit the intended method.

Repair routine: Mark the axis interval size before reading any coordinate/gradient.

Rapid self-check: If five small squares represent 20 units, what is one small square?

Retest rule: Complete a fresh question on the same skill without notes. If the same error repeats, identify and practise the prerequisite skill before another retest.

Source: SPEC

Reusable error log

Date	Topic/ref	Error	Correct rule	Trigger next time	Retest	Outcome
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Ten exam habits repeatedly supported by examiner feedback

Read the required answer form

Habit: Fraction, decimal, units, accuracy and explanation instructions matter.

Use: Apply in every timed set and in post-mock correction.

Use the calculator when allowed

Habit: Avoid unnecessary written arithmetic on calculator papers.

Use: Apply in every timed set and in post-mock correction.

Do not round early

Habit: Keep full precision until the requested final answer.

Use: Apply in every timed set and in post-mock correction.

Write logically

Habit: One clear method is easier to credit than several contradictory attempts.

Use: Apply in every timed set and in post-mock correction.

Show enough working

Habit: Method marks can survive a final arithmetic slip if the mathematics is visible.

Use: Apply in every timed set and in post-mock correction.

Check copied values

Habit: Misreading the question or your own figures creates avoidable losses.

Use: Apply in every timed set and in post-mock correction.

Simplify on non-calculator papers

Habit: Cancel factors and use exact fractions to reduce arithmetic load.

Use: Apply in every timed set and in post-mock correction.

Translate contexts before calculating

Habit: Identify what is known, what is required and which relationship connects them.

Use: Apply in every timed set and in post-mock correction.

Name reasons in geometry/explanations

Habit: A numerical answer alone may not satisfy an AO2 justification.

Use: Apply in every timed set and in post-mock correction.

Retest mistakes

Habit: Correction without a later unseen retest does not prove the misconception has been repaired.

Use: Apply in every timed set and in post-mock correction.

References and source register

[SPEC] Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) Mathematics (1MA1), Specification Issue 2, current Pearson qualification page checked 29 October 2026.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/mathematics/2015/specification-and-sample-assesment/gcse-maths-2015-specification.pdf>

[ER24F2] Pearson Edexcel Principal Examiner Feedback, 1MA1/2F, Summer 2024.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/Mathematics/2015/Exam-materials/1ma1-2f-pef-20240822.pdf>

[ER24F3] Pearson Edexcel Principal Examiner Feedback, 1MA1/3F, Summer 2024.

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[ER22F1] Pearson Edexcel Principal Examiner Feedback, 1MA1/1F, Summer 2022.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/mathematics/2015/exam-materials/1ma1-1f-pef-20220825.pdf>

[ER22H1] Pearson Edexcel Principal Examiner Feedback, 1MA1/1H, Summer 2022.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/mathematics/2015/exam-materials/1ma1-1h-pef-20220825.pdf>

[ER22H2] Pearson Edexcel Principal Examiner Feedback, 1MA1/2H, Summer 2022.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/mathematics/2015/exam-materials/1ma1-2h-pef-20220825.pdf>

[ER22H3] Pearson Edexcel Principal Examiner Feedback, 1MA1/3H, Summer 2022.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/mathematics/2015/exam-materials/1ma1-3h-pef-20220825.pdf>

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