Guide to:
Using a calculator

maths Links

Explanation:

When evaluating a complex fraction or root on a scientific calculator, press the **fraction button** ($\frac{\square}{\square}$) first so the display matches the printed question, or put brackets around the entire numerator and denominator: `(top) ÷ (bottom)`.

In GCSE exams, always write down the **full calculator display** (or at least the first 6 digits) as your first line of working before rounding to the requested number of decimal places or significant figures.

Example 1: Use your calculator to work out $\frac{14.8 + 7.6}{5.2 - 1.7^2}$.
Give your answer to **2 decimal places**.

Solution:

- **Numerator:** 14.8 + 7.6 = **22.4**
- **Denominator:** 5.2 − 2.89 = **2.31**
- **Full display:** 22.4 ÷ 2.31 = **9.6969696…**
- Round to 2 d.p. → **Answer: 9.70**

Example 2: Work out $\frac{\sqrt{(8.5^2 + 4.2^3)}}{3.1}$ correct to **3 significant figures**.

Solution:

- Inside square root: 72.25 + 74.088 = **146.338**
- Numerator: √146.338 = **12.097024…**
- Full display: 12.097024… ÷ 3.1 = **3.9022659…**
- Round to 3 s.f. → **Answer: 3.90**

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