

Homework Format

Math 323 Section 2, Spring 2013

This is a writing intensive class. For this reason, homework is VERY important, not only in terms of the mathematical content but also the style of writing. Homework assignments should be done in a neat and organized manner. Please keep the following in mind:

- Homework should be legible. This means neat handwriting/printing or typing. If you need help with mathematical word processing (LaTeX or MS Word), please see me. The lettering should be large enough and dark enough to easily read, and have enough room for my comments (margins, double spacing, etc.)
- Homework exercises should be written in sentences with proper use of English. (Sentences have both a subject and a predicate, and have punctuation!) Equations, theorems, lemmas, or other pieces should be labeled.
- Homework will be graded both for correctness and style. See below for some suggestions as to style of proofs.
- Include enough information so that the reader can see what the problem is about without referring to the source of the problem (textbook, worksheet, etc.)
- Homework should have one problem below the previous one. There should not be multiple columns. They should be in the correct order. Note: this does not mean that you need to DO the problems in the correct order, just that you should TURN IN the problems in the correct order.
- Use your common sense. This is a writing class, and so poorly written and presented problems will receive little or no credit.

Here are some guidelines to writing mathematics (mostly borrowed from T. Laetsch and F. Alayont, with additions by D. Glickenstein)

- In general, you will not want to turn in your “first draft,” which will likely not look like a good proof or well-written solution.
- Write as if the reader does not already know what you want to say. Write so that you could understand the solution if someone else had written it and gave it to you. This assumption will encourage complete answers. Strive for clarity in your writing. The reader can only see what you wrote, not what you meant to say.
- Focus on the process and not the final solution. Describe your thinking. Focus your explanation on why you are doing a certain step and not on the mechanical process used.
- Use an easy-to-read format. Use complete sentences when appropriate, write legibly, and organize your work in a logical manner. Please be sure also to leave room for comments; don't cover the entire sheet with your writing.
- Avoid vague words like “it.” Most problems contain several quantities. “It” doesn't tell which quantity you are referring to. The meaning may be clear to you, but may not be to the reader.
- Define any symbol you used that was not introduced in the problem and is not commonly used (e.g., no need to define π if it is being used as the usual irrational number).
- Use complete and proper mathematical notation. Use units on your answers when appropriate and label graphs completely.