

What the Mathematics Department Expects of Students in Math Courses ¹ Fall 2009

The guidelines below are intended to help you understand what it really means to be a student in a math course – what is expected of you and what you can do to help yourself stay on the path towards success. Knowing what your professor expects of you will aid communication between you and your professor.

1. **It is *your* responsibility to learn the material.** Do not expect to learn everything during your three class meetings per week. Most learning has to take place outside the classroom. Expect to spend a minimum of two hours outside of class for each hour spent in class. For a calculus course, this means at least 12 hours per week. How should all this time be spent?
 - (a) Read your textbook before class.
 - Reading a math book is not like reading a novel; you cannot skim it. When you read a math book, you should have pencil and paper in front of you. You should be taking notes, filling in missing steps, and jotting down questions.
 - At the end of every theorem/example/exercise, you should be able to outline the main ideas/steps.
 - (b) Go to class and be an active participant.
 - Your class participation includes you (partially) answering questions from your professor and classmates, you asking relevant questions, and you being actively engaged in in-class activities; class participation does not mean simply showing up.
 - (c) Read your textbook again after class. Review your class notes, filling in details as needed.
 - (d) Start the homework problems. Attempt to do every problem alone.
 - It is your responsibility to communicate clearly both orally and in writing. That includes use of proper grammar, whether that be the grammar of the English language or the symbolic grammar of the language of mathematics.
 - (e) Get together with a classmate and try to work through those homework problems which you couldn't complete alone.
 - (f) Go to your professor's office hours or to the tutoring center and ask for help on those homework problems which you still couldn't complete.
 - You should **never** ask a tutor to walk you through a homework problem from start to finish. The tutors are there to help you get started on a problem or to guide you through a difficult step, but their job is not to do your homework. That is your job. Any time you ask a tutor to walk you through an *entire* problem, you may be lowering your chances of getting that problem right on the exam.
2. **The pace may seem fast.** Sometimes you will need to sit down after class and go over slowly and carefully what happened. This may well include working through algebraic steps that were not completed in detail.
3. Expect your homework to be graded for accuracy, not just for completion.
 - All your homework will not be graded. However, you need to do the problems to learn the material; it's the only way. Also, you should learn to be critical of your own work. Perhaps THE most important thing you can take away from a math class is the ability to critically assess the correctness of your own work.

¹Adapted from *Teaching at the University Level*, Steven Zucker, Notices of the AMS, August 1996.

- Homework problems will not generally be discussed in class. If you have questions, you need to make a point to go to office hours and/or the tutoring center. Other tutors in the tutoring center can help you as well as your instructor.
 - Expect challenging and deep homework/exam questions: as you progress, fewer and fewer problems will follow the same process. You will need to use more problem solving skills because few problems will be exactly like the ones done in class or in the book.
4. It is your responsibility to make up any work, especially the reading, you missed due to an absence. This remains true whether or not your professor allows you to turn in late work.
 5. It is your responsibility to monitor your own progress (whether via Moodle or other method outlined by your professor) and to drop the class if you feel that you are not ready for it. If you drop by Census Date, the course will be erased from your record. If you drop, with your instructor's signature, by Monday, 26 October 2009, a "W" will appear on your record but will not effect your GPA. You **cannot** drop the course after this date, except in the case of extraordinary circumstances, provided that you file a petition with the Math Department Course Withdrawal Committee and the committee grants approval.