

Chapter 5: How Do I Make Homework Work for Me?

Doing Homework – The How and When

Homework is important to your success in a math course. It allows you to practice the problems that are going to be on the exams. By turning in homework regularly, you receive instant feedback on your understanding of the concepts learned in class. With math, practice does make perfect! You can expect to do well in a math course if you routinely practice the type of problems you are required to learn.

There is important information you need to know before you leave class:

- What is the homework assignment?
 - In a college math course, it's likely that there is homework given after every lecture. In order to truly understand the concepts taught, you have to practice.
- Do I understand the assignment?
 - Read through the problems assigned before you leave class. If you do not understand what you are expected to do, **ask the professor before you leave**.
- When is the assignment due?
 - If homework is a component of your grade, you want to turn it in on time so you get full credit. Most professors do not except late work. So get the assignment in by the deadline!
- Can I seek a tutor or another student to help me with concepts I do not understand?
 - Ask your professor if you're allowed to get help from a tutor or classmate. Be aware that if it is a graded assignment, you might be expected to do the work without any outside help.
- When is your professor available to answer questions?
 - Read your syllabus to see when your professor has office hours. If you know you are not available during office hours, ask your professor **before** you leave if there is an alternate time you can meet to ask questions about your homework.

The following tips will help you complete your homework.

Before Class:

- Make sure you have your homework with you.
 - Professors do not accept the "I left it at home" or "It's in my car" story. If it is due at the beginning of class, then hand it in on time to receive full credit.
- Make sure you have answered all of the homework questions.
 - If there was a question you did not know how to answer, ask the professor how to do it **before** you go to class.
- Use the same steps to answer your homework problems that you will be required to use on the tests.
 - Make sure you note the steps you took to answer all of the homework questions.

- Don't cut corners. Check your answers. Remember the steps you took to answer all of the problems. In order to understand the lecture coming up, you have to know the material that was taught in the class before.

During Class:

- During class the professor will return graded homework assignments.
 - Before you leave, look over the graded assignment. Find all of your mistakes and make sure you know what you did wrong. If you have any questions on the graded assignment, ask the professor to go over it with you at the end of class.
 - Make note of the problems you got wrong and review that material before you do your next homework assignment.

After Class:

- When should I do my homework?
 - You should start and complete your homework as soon after class as possible. If you do your homework right after the lecture, the material will be fresh in your mind.
 - Do your homework at the same time after class every day. Establishing a routine ensures you have plenty of time to complete your assignments and aren't rushed before class.
 - Do not wait until the last minute to complete your homework. If you are in a rush to complete an assignment, you won't have the time necessary to learn all of the material. This could result in a lower grade come test time!.
- Where should I do my homework?
 - You want to do your homework in a comfortable environment. Choose a place that allows you to concentrate; desk in your room, kitchen table, library, etc. You want to be free of distractions.
 - If you choose to do your homework with other students, choose a group that motivates you to do your work.
 - Have all of your materials with you before you start. Make sure you have your book, notes, calculator, pencils, and something to eat and drink.
 - Avoid doing your homework in bed late at night. Keep in an upright position to ensure you are alert and able to learn math!
- Do I need to show all of my work?
 - You should write down every step needed to solve each problem. Most professors do not just care about your answer; it is also HOW you got the answer that is important. Also, use your homework assignments to review for exams. Chapter exams are cumulative; everything you learned in that chapter will likely be on the exam.
 - After you have completed your homework, check to see if there are any answers to the homework questions in your textbook. The majority of mathematics textbooks have the answers to the odd homework exercises in the back of the book. If you can, check your answers. Do not copy down the correct answer if your answer is wrong. You will need to



know how to get the correct answer on the exam, so ask your professor how to do the problem before you turn in your work.

- Below is an example of a couple of homework problems. Every step is on a different line and in detail. You can write notes to yourself next to every step as well. The example is taken from Math 082, Solving Equations with Rational Numbers.

Math 082 Homework	Jane Smith
Solving Equations with the Rational Numbers	
1. $\frac{5}{8}x = -\frac{1}{3}$	
Common Denominator: 24	
$(24)\frac{5}{8}x = -\frac{1}{3}(24)$ (Multiply both sides by 24)	
$\overset{3}{\cancel{24}}\frac{5}{\cancel{8}}x = -\frac{\overset{1}{\cancel{24}}}{\cancel{3}}$	
$15x = -8$ (Divide both sides by 15)	
$x = -\frac{8}{15}$	
2. $\frac{1}{3}x + \frac{3}{4} = \frac{1}{6}x - \frac{5}{2}$	
Common Denominator: 12	
$(12)\frac{1}{3}x + (12)\frac{3}{4} = (12)\frac{1}{6}x - (12)\frac{5}{2}$ (Multiply both sides by 12)	
$\overset{4}{\cancel{12}}\frac{1}{\cancel{3}}x + \overset{3}{\cancel{12}}\frac{3}{\cancel{4}} = \overset{2}{\cancel{12}}\frac{1}{\cancel{6}}x - \overset{6}{\cancel{12}}\frac{5}{\cancel{2}}$	
$4x + 9 = 2x - 30$ (Subtract 2x from both sides)	
$2x + 9 = -30$ (Subtract 9 from both sides)	
$2x = -39$ (Divide both sides by 2)	
$x = \frac{-39}{2}$	

Chapter 5: How Do I Make Homework Work for Me?

Doing Homework – The How and When

Review Questions

1. What five questions should you ask the professor before you leave class?
2. Why should you use the same steps to answer your homework problems that you will be required to use on the tests?
3. What should you do if you get a problem wrong on a graded homework assignment?
4. When is the best time to do your homework?
5. Why is it important to show all your work on a homework assignment?

