

The Dr. Loveless Recipe for Success in Math 124/5/6 at UW

1. Approach the homework in an effective way:

The main goal of the homework is to learn and practice the material so that you can show your understanding on the exams. Remember the exams are worth more than 80% of your grade and the homework is only 10% of your grade. So the goal is not to complete homework as fast as possible, the goal is to use the homework to best prepare for the exams. That includes:

(a) **Try to never use the “Watch it” or “Practice another Version”!!**

If you are using the webassign helpers on more than two problems on each assignment, then you are just copying and you aren't learning the material. Students that use the “Watch it” a lot often get high homework scores and low exam scores. You won't have the “Watch It” during the exam so don't use it when you are doing homework.

(b) **Check all your answers on your own and get it correct in one submission. And never, ever use more than two submissions!** Don't use webassign to check your work. Check it yourself (do your solutions work?, you can check!). If you don't get it right on your first submission, then check all your work and talk to a tutor. Always get the answer correct on your second submission. Don't waste submissions just trying different inputs. Remember you are generously given five submission tries and you should NEVER use all five. You should never come to me with a question and say “I am on my last submission”. Come to me after you have two failed submission (not after four). **Remember you only get ONE submission on an exam problem!**

(c) **Treat every homework problem like an exam problem.** At the end of each problem ask yourself: “Could I do this problem if it was on a midterm? Do I understand the main concepts and the necessary algebra?” If the answer is NO, then you need to make a note to yourself to come back and review this topic or ask about it in office hours. Keep a journal and marked down any problems that confuse you.

(d) **At the end of each assignment and each week, review the homework.** After the due date passes for each assignment (perhaps each Friday), go back through the homework and make notes of the key concepts or things that confused you. Then go look in the exam archive and practice some old midterm problems. In this way, you can start to see what you will need to know when you take the midterm.

2. Study for exams in an effective way:

(a) **At the end of each week, quickly look through 3-4 old exams.** Find problems like the homework and practice them. Even 15 minutes of this type of review each week can be quite helpful.

(b) **At least one full week before the exam, print off 2-3 old midterms and work through them in detail.** Think of these as pre-tests. Show your work to a classmate, a tutor, your TA or me and we can give you quick pointers on ways to do better.

(c) **Sometime in the week before the exam, spend 15 minutes flipping through ALL the old midterms. When you are doing this, get out a notebook and do the following:** For each problem, write down in words what the problem is about, and what the first two steps would be. If you don't know the first two steps, then make a note to come back to that problem and move on to the next problem. Spend no more than 10-15 seconds on each page. When you are doing this type of studying the main goal is to practice problem recognition and make sure you know all the main concepts. This is a good way to gain confidence and overcome anxiety. And you will quickly recognize recurring themes and you will quickly find the problems you keep getting stuck on. Then go back through your journal and make sure to ask about the problems that keep getting you tripped up.

(d) **Two days before the midterm, work through 2-3 old exams in detail again.** At this point you should see marked improvement from the “pretest” you took a week earlier.

(e) **Get a good night's sleep the night before the exam and take the test showing everything you know.** Don't leave questions blank, show what you know. Make sure to manage your time well (no more than 10 minutes a page). And check your work on each problem wherever possible.