
Advice for Succeeding in Math 120

Cutting to the chase: this is a hard class. Here are some habits you should form to stay on top of things.

1. Ask questions in class.

I get it: it's tough to say you're confused in a room of 160 people. But I promise your classmates will appreciate the clarification, and you'll have a much easier time absorbing the lecture if you ask for help when you get lost.

2. Use the Catalyst forum.

This is generally the fastest way to get help from me and your TAs outside of class. If I'm at my computer and it's not especially late, I'll usually answer your question within 15 minutes. Feel free to ask any questions, general or specific, about any homework or exam problems.

<https://catalyst.uw.edu/gopost/board/ostroff/38744/>

For best results, your question should specify what's confusing you. Sometimes you just don't know how to start a problem (that's fine!), but if you've done a lot of work already, please tell me where you're getting lost so I can point you in the right direction.

3. Start the homework early. Look at it even earlier.

The homework assignments are long, and it's *really* difficult to finish them in one sitting. So don't wait to start an assignment until the night it's due.

Better yet: read through the problems a week in advance, even if you don't have time to work on them yet. Knowing what's expected of you will help you get more out of lecture and quiz sections.

4. Don't guess your way through the homework.

You only have a limited number of tries (usually five) on homework problems, so randomly guessing won't help much. Think of the homework as preparation for the exam, and make sure you really understand what's going on!

5. Keep track of your progress.

We cover lots of topics in this course. I'll periodically post lists of things you should know, so *make sure you know them!* Don't just cross your fingers and hope something won't be on the test, because it probably will.

6. Form a study group.

Everyone learns differently, so maybe you study best on your own. Even still, it helps to know a few people in the class so you can reach out to them for help at times.

7. Practice the Daily Fake Exam Problems.

Starting in the second week, I'll post daily problems before each class that I think are representative of fair exam problems. You should probably know how to do these.

8. Time yourself on old exams.

The scores on the first midterm are usually the lowest, because people aren't prepared for how short math exams are at UW. Practice with a timer to get yourself up to speed!