
Jonah's Tips for Not Having WebAssign Mark Your Problems Incorrectly

So, WebAssign! It's got some handy features, and automatic grading so that you get to learn *right away* if you made a mistake or not. That's pretty cool. But sometimes it's the worst. Here are some things to keep in mind so that it's not the worst.

- **Rounding!** WebAssign can be pretty picky about this, but here's the trick: you will *never* be marked wrong for being too accurate. So if you're tired of rounding decimals incorrectly, just give *more* decimal places than they ask for in each problem. Certainly don't give fewer. Also, be careful about rounding your answers early on in a multi-step problem: you might be close enough to get the right answer for part (a), but a small rounding error early on could add up to a much bigger error in part (b).
- **Exact answers!** Sometimes WebAssign doesn't want you to round at all, and this is especially true for problems where the little window pops up that lets you enter various mathematical symbols. If you can enter square roots and whatnot, enter them! Don't convert to decimal in the first place, and you don't need to worry about rounding.
- **Variable names!** If the problem talks about the variable x and you write X , it will be marked wrong. And if a problem doesn't use a letter at all, don't include it in your answer! WebAssign has no idea that you think d stands for distance, so unless that's part of the problem, leave it out of your solution. And be sure to use the *right letters!* If a problem involves the variable t , make sure you don't accidentally write x instead.
- **Greek letters are different!** Some problems involve other variables like Greek letters, and you can enter these from the window on the left side of the screen. Don't confuse the Greek letters α and ω for the Roman letter a and w .
- **Equations or expressions?** Sometimes a problem wants an *equation*, so your answer should include the equals sign (unless an equals sign is already provided for you; see the next bullet point). Sometimes the problem wants an *expression*, in which case you *don't* want an equals sign. Contrast these two:
 1. Give an equation for the distance d traveled by the car (in feet) after t seconds.
Solution: $d = \sqrt{9t^2 + 4t}$
 2. Give an expression for the distance traveled by the car (in feet) after t seconds.
Solution: $\sqrt{9t^2 + 4t}$
- **Punctuation!** If a problem asks for an ordered pair, look carefully at the answer box: if there are already parentheses written around the box, then you don't need to write your own. If there *aren't* any parentheses, then you should include them.

- **Words!** Sometimes a problem will ask you to type “TRUE” or “FALSE”, or “DNE”, or “UNDEFINED”, or something like that. Use the same capitalization and phrasing as given by the problem.
- **Units!** Usually, if a problem involves some real-world units, the units will be written next to the box. (If not, you’ll have to write them yourself, but I don’t think that happens very often in this class.) Make sure the units provided are the ones you’re expecting! If a problem gives you a speed in miles per hour, but the answer box says “feet”, you’ll need to do some conversion.
- **Finally, chill out.** If you do end up missing points for silly reasons, it’s not the end of the world. There are thousands of points of homework problems that you’ll accumulate over the course of this class, so even a 20-point problem is unlikely to affect your grade. Plus, the grading system allows you to miss 10% of the points and still have a perfect homework score.

So, don’t worry too much about it, but please feel free to come to me any time you’ve got more questions about how WebAssign works, or if you need me to check on anything. As always, asking questions on the online forum is the fastest way to get a response from me when you’ve got problems with the homework.