

MA/CSSE 473 Homework Success (updated 11/21/2016)

In some lower-level Math and CS courses, the written homework problems are fairly routine; you can set aside a 2-3 hour time slot for an assignment and crank them all out in one session. **That strategy is unlikely to work in this course.**

In each 473 assignment, there are some routine problems to help you digest and check your understanding of what you have read. But there will often be other problems which require a creative approach, or require some serious thought about how to explain your answer.

For the problems that require creativity, you may need to think about them, wait a day (while your brain keeps processing in the background), come back to the problem the next day, think some more, give it a rest, come back another day and finish the problem.

Suggested strategy:

1. Read the textbook sections, posted PowerPoint slides, etc. that are relevant.
2. A few days (better 7 days, but you can't do that for HW1) before it is due:
 - a. Read through the homework assignment to make sure you understand what is being asked for each problem (post on Piazza if you don't understand).
 - b. Make note of topics that you will need to re-read.
 - c. Determine which problems are most likely to be hardest for you, and spend some time thinking about them. Textbook problems marked with the "puzzle piece" icon are likely candidates.
 - d. Do one easy problem and write up your answer.
3. Each day after that
 - a. Spend some more time thinking about the difficult problems. Hopefully you will get at least one of them after that.
 - b. Knock off one or two (or more) of the simpler problems
 - c. Determine whether you need to ask for help.
 - i. Piazza forums can be a great source of help (try not to post "spoilers").
 - ii. Email your instructor.
4. When you get one of the hard problems
 - a. Celebrate!
5. When you have finished all of the problems
 - a. Read your solutions one more time to see if they make sense.
 - b. Assemble the problems in the correct order.
 - c. If you scan your hand-written documents, be sure that all problems are readable and that nothing got cut off at the bottom or sides of the page. If your scanner produces multiple documents, put them into a ZIP or RAR file. **DO NOT WRITE ON THE BACK OF PAGES THAT YOU PLAN TO SCAN.**
 - d. Submit to the MOODLE dropbox.
 - e. Open your submission to make sure it worked.
 - f. Fill out the survey for extra credit.
 - g. Now you can really celebrate!

How to be frustrated by a 473 homework assignment:

Put it off until the day before it is due, and plan to do it in one or two long, grueling sessions. If you do this, it is likely that you will spend more total time on the problems than if you spread them out over many days. You may not get some of the problems. And you certainly won't have much fun!