

**Handout for Math Studying**  
**University of Wisconsin - Madison**  
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# 1 Getting a good start

## 1.1 First lecture

Always attend the first day of lecture; this is when the lecturer will explain what will happen during the semester. If you cannot attend the first day, make an appointment to meet with your lecturer or TA to go over what you have missed. Make sure that you know:

- What you will be graded on. More specifically:
  - Is there an attendance policy?
  - Will homework be collected?
  - Will there be quizzes? If so, when, and what should you do if you cannot attend class on a day when there is a quiz?
  - How many exams will there be? Which ones are cumulative?
  - Are there any special instructions you must follow to obtain full credit? (For example, some instructors will say that if a homework does not have the student's discussion section number on it, it will be given a score of zero!)
- When and where lecture and discussion section are
- When and where office hours will be held for your Professor and TA
- When the final exam is. Make sure that you do not have a conflict. If you do, deal with it right away. Even though it is University policy that three exams in a period of 24 hours is considered a conflict, instructors are encouraged to accommodate this conflict only if students notify their instructor **during the first three weeks of classes!**

## 1.2 Game plan

Once you have all the facts, take a few minutes to devise a game plan for the semester. First, think of what grade you would like to get in the class. If you want an A, you will have to work harder, and sacrifice other things (paid work, partying, hobbies...) to achieve your goal. If you are okay with a C, you can plan to spend less time studying every week.

Set aside time every day or every other day to do math. Studies have shown that if you do math at the same time and at the same place every time, your studying will be more effective. Plan to work for periods of forty-five minutes to an hour at a time. The number of hours per week you should spend on your math class is roughly 3 times the number of credits the class is worth. That means that if you are taking a 5-credit math class, you should spend 15 hours a week on math. Minus the 5 hours you spend in lecture and discussion, that is 10 hours of working on your own per week. Note that this is for you to obtain an average grade: if you want to get an A or if you are struggling with the material you might have to spend more time doing math every week.

On a normal week, the ten hours (or so, remember to adjust accordingly) that you will spend doing math should be spent preparing for lecture (this is the subject of section 2) and doing homework (this is the subject of section 3). During the week before an exam your game plan will change, and section 5 discusses how to study for a math exam.

## 2 Going to lecture

At various points in your academic career you will feel like going to lecture is a waste of your time, probably because your lecturer is doing a poor job. You will be wrong. College is not like high school. You are not supposed to be able to sit in lecture and learn the material presented by your lecturer. Instead, you are supposed to prepare before going to lecture so that you can follow what the lecturer is presenting. If you do it right, going to lecture will always be a good use of your time.

### 2.1 Before class

Not all of this advice will apply to every lecture. It is true that some lecturers are more skilled at making the material accessible than other lecturers. If you have a good lecturer, you can probably get away with preparing for lecture less. If you have a bad lecturer, you will have to prepare more to make going to class worthwhile. Either way you should spend about the same amount of time learning math; whatever preparation you do before class is work you will not have to do again before you do your homework.

#### 2.1.1 Do the homework from the previous lecture

Sometimes your schedule will not allow you to complete the homework for one lecture before the next lecture, but you should really aim to spend at least an hour on the previous lecture before you go to the next. Your lecturer will build on what he or she did last time, and expect you to follow.

#### 2.1.2 Look over what will be covered in class

This is where your strategy will change depending on how well you can learn from your lecturer.

If you generally can learn well during lecture, take a half-hour to look at the sections that will be covered that day. Which ideas from previous sections will be used? What will the lecturer try to do? In Thomas' Calculus, read the beginnings of sections, they usually tell a nice little story of what will happen.

If you have trouble following lecture, you will need more preparation time: as much as an hour for a 50-minute class and an hour and a half for a power lecture. For each section that will be covered in class, do the following:

- Try to say in your own words what the goal of the section is. For example, it might be “Find the derivative of trig functions” or “Introduce a convergence test”.
- Familiarize yourself with the definition of each important concept introduced in the section, if any.
- For each boxed formula in the section, spend five minutes trying to understand what it says.

#### 2.1.3 Recap the previous lecture

In the morning while having breakfast or on the bus to school, take ten minutes to recap in your head what happened in the previous lecture. Try to guess what will appear again in that day's

lecture. Think like the “Previously on...” segment that they do before TV shows. Make it snappy so viewers don’t change channels.

## **2.2 During class**

So you have prepared for class and now you are in class. Unfortunately, it is not enough to be physically present to class to reap the benefits of going to lecture. Here is what you should be doing during lecture to really get your money’s worth.

### **2.2.1 Pay attention**

Text-messaging, reading the newspaper and chatting with your friends during lecture is not only incredibly rude to the lecturer and your peers, but it is also a waste of your time. You are paying good money for your lecturer to tell you about math. Your friends and the paper will still be there when lecture is over. If people around you are loud or disruptive, don’t hesitate to tell them to quiet down. Everybody will think of you as a hero.

### **2.2.2 To take notes or not to take notes?**

Do not be a slave to note-taking. Don’t write down everything that is on the board at the expense of actually following the lecture. Depending on the pace and style of your lecturer, it might be impossible or undesirable to take complete notes. Sometimes it will be better to spend lecture doing the other things on this list, writing down only the important remarks or types of examples that are covered. If you do choose to take notes, section 2.3 outlines note-taking strategies.

### **2.2.3 Find out what matters to your lecturer**

In a typical Calculus class at UW–Madison lecturers also write the exams for the class. Since these determine the greatest part of your grade, finding out what might be on the exams will help you be successful in the class. Professors constantly drop hints about what might be on the exam: The examples they choose to do on the board and the concepts they go over again and again are likely to show up on the exam. Some Professors even skip whole sections or subsections of the textbook, and specify that you are not responsible for this material; it would be a shame if you didn’t take note of that and over-studied for the exam!

### **2.2.4 Ask questions**

If you are confused, it is likely most people are too. It is extremely scary to ask a question in a big lecture hall, and it might take you a couple semesters to work up the courage, but if you can do it, do it. Otherwise, make sure to write down your questions so you do have them answered at some point.

### **2.2.5 Actively think**

This is the most difficult thing to do during lecture, and it will likely only be possible if you prepared for class. During class, try not to let things wash over you as you write them down mindlessly. Rather, try to think of what is happening. Which rules and techniques are being used? How does what the lecturer says make sense? In short, try to understand as much as possible as the lecture

is going, rather than telling yourself that you'll think about it later. It will not always be possible for you to understand most of what is going on during lecture, but the goal is to do your best. It will make Calculus lecture infinitely less boring.

## 2.3 Note-taking

If you decide to take notes during lecture (which you almost always should), you need a good note-taking system so that your notes help you learn during and after lecture. Don't be afraid to experiment (after all, you're in college now) to find a system that works for you.

### 2.3.1 Organize your things

Your notes will be useless if you lose them. For this reason it pays a lot to invest in some material at the beginning of the semester. Buy a different notebook or binder for each of your classes. Make sure to bring the notebook or binder to lecture so that you can write your notes in it. Write down the date and sections covered at the beginning of lecture. That kind of stuff. The goal is for you to end up with a full set of useful notes at the end of the semester, not a bunch of pieces of paper that you don't know what to do with.

### 2.3.2 Leave room for yourself

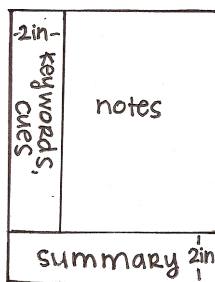
Separate your thoughts from those of the lecturer. This means two things: The first is that you should think for yourself about the material covered in class. No amount of reviewing and learning the lecturer's thoughts will get you a good grade in math. The second is that your note-taking plan should leave blank spaces for you to write questions, explanations in your own words and connections to other sections of the class.

Despite your best efforts, sometimes you will not be able to understand some things during lecture. In that case, write down as much as you can, and leave yourself blank spaces to fill in when you go over the material again.

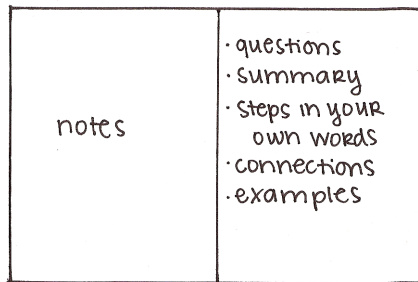
### 2.3.3 Some examples

If you are ready to break out of the conventional "fill your page with writing" note-taking technique, here are three ways to divide your page to leave room in your notes for thoughts, cues, keywords or summaries. You can put in the division lines before lecture or simply approximate these divisions. Use these ideas to devise your own note-taking style that fulfills your note-taking needs.

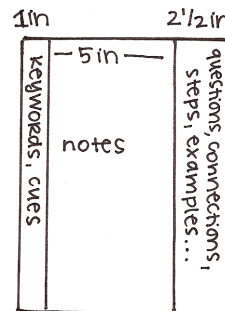
1. Cornell method



## 2. Malekpour method



## 3. Three-columns method



## 2.4 After class

### 2.4.1 Right after class

As soon as possible after *every* lecture, spend at least 5 minutes going over your notes. Take that time to clarify what you wrote (sometimes you might use abbreviations or phrases that you will not remember later). Identify the blanks to fill and decide how you will fill them (read the textbook, see your TA or Professor, ask a friend or tutor...). Studies have shown that doing this within 24 hours of lecture will greatly help your retention of class material.

### 2.4.2 That week

Every week, take some time to read over your notes and answer the questions you wrote down during lecture. If you left some sections blank, fill them in. If you decided to write down cues, highlight or organize your notes, do it at that time. If you have left space for it, rewrite the steps to solve problems in your own words. Write down connections to other sections. For example, when you are doing convergence test in Calculus II you will need to compute limits using techniques you were taught in Calculus I. Look up these techniques and write down the sections they appear in for future reference. It is crucial to do this work every week so that you are building on what you have learned. Leaving this to the days before the exam will almost certainly ensure that you have to relearn rather than review the material.

## **2.5 If something terrible happens**

Most lecturers are fine with students occasionally missing lecture, especially if it is for a good reason. If you have to miss lecture, make sure to get the notes and the important information given in class. If you can ask a friend, great. If not, contact your lecturer or TA to ask for the sections covered and if anything important was said (test date, important material to study, etc.). If you have to miss many lectures, notify your lecturer and TA as soon as possible and get help. (And you might want to read section 6.2.)

## 3 Doing homework

### 3.1 The idea behind math homework

The single most important thing students should know about doing homework in a math class is that they should do it for their own good. Homework is not assigned to you as a chore or a sadistic experiment by instructors; it is assigned to you because your instructor knows that doing homework is the **only** way students learn math. So don't do your homework to get completion or correctness credit. Do it to do well on the exams, and keep this goal in mind while you do your homework.

The problems assigned by your lecturer generally represent the bare minimum you should do to earn a B in the class. Often, you should do more problems than the ones assigned. Ideally, you should solve problems until you can easily solve any problem from a given section without help from your notes or TA.

### 3.2 Getting ready

You should do everything in the section "Going to lecture" *before* you start doing homework. There is little point in trying to solve problems before you have reviewed your notes and spent some time mulling over the ideas covered in lecture. If you re-read your notes and spend time trying to understand what is happening, doing your homework will be much less frustrating.

### 3.3 Be neat!

This is probably the piece of advice math students would benefit most from following. Math is a very special subject. It uses a foreign language (math symbols) to logically discuss highly abstract concepts. To do well in mathematics, one needs a highly organized mind, prepared to meticulously follow logical steps towards a conclusion.

What this means is that it is very very important that you be extremely neat in writing your math homework. The process of writing down the steps to solve problems methodically and clearly, with proper use of the mathematical language, will do more to teach you math than any tutor could. It will also allow you to keep track of what you are doing and thinking at every step of the process, and clarify your thoughts on what is going on.

In addition, it is this very neat writing that your TA and Professor expect from you on exams. Practicing it on the homework will allow you to do better on the exams.

Finally, if you write your homework neatly, with section numbers and clear steps, it will be easier for you to ask questions about homework problems when you see your TA. It will also be easier to follow along during discussion section if your TA solves this problem at the board. And finally, when exam time comes, you will be able to look back to beautifully written and explained problems to jog your memory when you study.



### 3.4 The nitty-gritty

As explained earlier, do your homework regularly. If you fall behind it will quickly become impossible to catch up. Do your homework at the same time and the same place every time. Do not use your textbook or solutions manual at first; try to solve problems on your own. If you get stuck, study more and get back to the problem. Make sure that by the end of the time you spend working on a problem you can solve the problem on your own, without any help.

This last point is worth repeating. Solving a problem by looking at the answer and “working back” to it, or by looking it up in the solutions manual doesn’t count. **If you are doing that, you might as well save yourself the trouble and not do your homework at all.** I know that this is hard to believe, but it is true. Remember, you are doing your homework to prepare for the exam (never lose sight of that!). On the exam there will be no notes, no answers at the back of the book, nothing. So use the back of the book or a solutions manual only as a way to check your answer when you are fully confident that you have solved the problem correctly. Better yet, check your answer some other way (your TA or Professor might be able to teach you ways to do it) or with other students taking the class and forget that the solutions manual even exists.

Finally, end on a high note. If you are struggling with problems from a certain section, solve a few problems from a section you know well before you stop working. It will make you feel confident and happy, and studies show that a positive attitude towards math usually lead to higher grades in math classes.

## 4 Going to discussion

If you have done everything from “Going to lecture” and “Doing homework” correctly, then going to discussion should not require any preparation other than getting your things together and showing up. You will have plenty of questions from going over your lecture notes and doing your homework, and it will be easy for you to follow along with your TA on problems you have solved to make sure that you haven’t missed anything. As a rule, try to ask your questions from your lecture notes at the beginning of discussion to clear up conceptual misunderstandings; then when these concepts show up in homework problems you will be able to follow better.

**If you haven’t been doing your homework and learning the material on your own, discussion section will be a waste of your time.** Just as copying your homework from the solutions manual is not worth the time it takes, copying homework problems from the board in discussion section does not help you. It might feel like you are learning what your TA is saying, but really when the time comes to solve the same problem on your own on the exam, you will fail.

## 5 Preparing for tests

### 5.1 From homework to tests

The main part of preparing for a math test is to do the homework, since it is assigned specifically to give you the practice you need to do well on the test. However, only doing the homework might not be enough to prepare for the test. This is especially true if you did the homework with other people, or with your notes, the book or a solutions manual. Other things that are different between doing homework and taking a test is that on the test the material is all mixed up and covers many different sections of the book, so you can't get into a "groove". You will also have time constraints on the exam, and you might be much more nervous.

It is important that you get to know yourself and see in which ways taking tests affects you. If you have trouble focusing on math for the period of time it takes to get through the test, make your study sessions longer and longer until you feel confident that you can do math for two hours continuously. If you get confused when problems are all jumbled up or you don't know which sections they come from, make yourself note cards with math problems, mix them up, and then try to solve them. Be creative, and try to think outside the box for ways to overcome your difficulties in a way that is interesting and fun for you.

Even if you cannot identify exactly what trips you up during tests (or if nothing in particular trips you up during tests), to study most effectively you should try to mimic the test conditions you will encounter. For this, you will need to assemble between 5 and 8 problems that are representative of the material that will be covered on the test. Two places to get these problems are the Practice Exercises at the end of each Chapter in Thomas' Calculus and the list of past exams posted online on the Math Library website (<http://math.library.wisc.edu/reserve/>). Once you have assembled your problems, sit in silence, for as much time as you'll have on the exam, by yourself, and try to solve the problems. Ideally you should do this after you have studied so that you don't get depressed.

Finally, if you have time management issues or anxiety issues during tests, don't hesitate to ask for help. Resources and more on this can be found in Section 5.4 below.

### 5.2 The nitty-gritty

Two weeks before the test find out the sections covered on the test, and make sure to complete your homework for all these sections about one week before the exam. This way, for the week before a test, the ten hours you should spend doing math will be reallocated almost completely to studying. If lecture covers new material, prepare for lecture and recap after lecture as usual.

Ideally, you should study in three phases. During Phase I, spend an hour (total) going over each section in turn, remembering what was in them. Cross out the ones that you know very well, have become easy, are fluff, or your instructor told you would not be covered on the test. For example, the first section of the textbook that talks about derivatives covers very easy derivatives that you probably remember off the top of your head now, and you do not need to study this before the test. Circle the ones that you feel will be hard or require extra studying time, and make a studying

plan. The studying plan should be just precise enough to make sure that you won't run out of time because you studied the first sections for too long.

During Phase II, go over each section that is not crossed out and study them. In math, studying a section means redoing a few homework problems (without looking at your homework!) to make sure you remember how to solve the problems. When you cannot solve a problem, go back to your notes or textbook for help. If you are still stuck, write down the specific problem on a list that you will bring to your TA or Professor's office hours and move on. You might also want to keep a piece of paper on which you will write the important formulae and concepts that you will need to learn by heart or review just before the test. This list should be short and keep to the essentials, almost like a cheat-sheet for the exam. Make sure to see your Professor or TA for help as part of Phase II.

Phase III is the last 24 hours before the test. Ideally, you shouldn't learn anything new during that time. Read over your list of important formulae and concepts so they are fresh in your mind. The night before the test, eat well, and do something relaxing before going to bed early. You will need a sharp mind to take the exam, and often an hour of sleep is more useful in a test situation than an hour of cramming.

### 5.3 The test

You have heard all this advice before: if you get stuck on a question move on to the next one; budget your test time to allow enough time to take a shot at each question; leave 10 minutes at the end of the exams to review your answers; etc.

What you might not have heard before though is to make sure during the test that you remain aware of exactly what is going on. A test is a means by which your Professor and TA attempt to find out how much material you have understood from their class. This means that it is much more important for you to convey the main ideas of the solutions to a problem than to get every little detail right. This means that writing down what you would do, or what you are attempting to do can get some partial credit. This means that you should **never** write down anything that is false. This means that "faking" your way through an answer will only get you points if you are close enough; if you say something ridiculous or badly wrong you stand to lose a lot of points.

Finally, think of the audience for your test. The people that will be grading your test are professional mathematicians. What mathematicians enjoy most is clarity and logic. Make sure that your steps follow from each other in a clear, ordered manner. Make sure that your presentation on the page is neat and well-aligned. Explain your steps in words and using correct mathematical language and symbols. In other words, make yourself as likeable as possible.

### 5.4 Testing anxiety and other conditions

If you suffer from testing anxiety or another condition, this might prevent you from doing as well as you should. If you feel that you are in this situation, seek help. The Greater University Tutoring Service (GUTS) offers both hour-long presentations on how to overcome testing anxiety and individual appointments with study skills advisors who will work with you to find what works. More information about GUTS can be found at [http://guts.studentorg.wisc.edu/getatutor\\_](http://guts.studentorg.wisc.edu/getatutor_)

`studyskills.htm`. If you think you need more help, the University Health Services offer a range of counseling services, including anxiety management. More information about their services can be found at <http://www.uhs.wisc.edu>. Finally, if you think that your problem might come from a disability, the McBurney center will test you to identify your problem, and if you do have a disability they will come up with accommodations that will help you perform to your full potential during tests. Their website is <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>.

## 5.5 If something terrible happens

If something happens before the exam that you think will affect your performance on the exam (a death in the family or a serious illness), notify your TA and your Professor right away, explaining your circumstances as clearly as possible. If the timing makes it so that you do not hear from them before the actual time of the exam, go take the exam and do your best. If you are lucky your Professor or TA will take your circumstances into consideration when assigning your final grade. Under any circumstances, do **not** just not show up for the exam.

If something happens on the day of the exam (you over-sleep, your car breaks down, etc.) that prevents you from going to the exam, notify your TA and Professor right away, again explaining your circumstances as well as you can. In certain cases, if your email is polite and nice and does not assume that you should be accommodated, your TA or Professor might be willing to let you retake the exam or to excuse you from the exam. If they do, thank them, and make sure to be the very best student they have ever had for the rest of the semester.

Note that you are much more likely to be accommodated if you are nice and polite, and if your TA and/or Professor know you and have a good opinion of you. Keep this in mind whenever you interact with them. In the same vein, going to lecture and discussion regularly, handing in homework on time, and generally following the rules during the semester will go a long way towards getting you sympathy if something terrible ever happens.

## 6 Getting help

### 6.1 If you are struggling with math

At some point you might realize that despite all the good advice in this handout you will not do as well in your math class as you would like. UW-Madison and the math department offer a range of options for students who would like extra help in their math classes. Here they are, organized by amount of commitment required.

Note that this list is concerned with offering help with learning mathematics. If your problem is not directly related to mathematics (you think you might have a disability, you need counseling, you are overwhelmed by your classes, etc.), consider visiting <http://students.wisc.edu/> for links to resources, student organizations and centers which might be able to help.

#### 6.1.1 Online help

More and more math is now online, and a quick search of the words you don't know or of the concepts you are struggling with might get you unstuck. In addition to searching in your favorite search engine, check out Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>) and MathWorld (<http://mathworld.wolfram.com>) for definitions and examples. Some websites, like <http://www.mathway.com> can even compute integrals and derivatives.

#### 6.1.2 Past finals

One of the best ways to study for an exam, as we have seen, is to practice. For this reason the Math Department keeps copies of some old exams on the Math Library website. For even more effective studying, ask your TA or instructor which exams are most like the exams you will take in your class. The exams are posted at <http://math.library.wisc.edu/reserve/>.

#### 6.1.3 Math Board

The Math Board is just a wooden board with slots labeled for most of the courses offered by the Math Department. Interested students can fill out a card with information about themselves (name, course, instructor, contact information), and put that card in the slot which matches their course. Students can also read the cards that have been placed into the various slots, and use the information from the cards to contact one another to set up study groups, etc. The Math Board is just opposite Van Vleck B207.

#### 6.1.4 Office hours

Professors and TAs in the math department are required to set aside time every week when they are available to work with students from their classes. When and where your instructor's office hours are is usually posted on your instructor's website. If your instructor does not have a website or you cannot find the information, email them to find out. All TAs, their email addresses and websites are listed at <http://www.math.wisc.edu/~apache/psdbgrad.html>. All Professors, their email addresses and websites are listed at <http://www.math.wisc.edu/~apache/psdbfaculty.photo.A.html>.

Attending office hours is appropriate if you are struggling with a specific concept and have specific, well-formed questions to ask. It is also appropriate if you are in deeper trouble and would like to ask your instructor for advice on what to do. If you will be needing regular help for a few hours every week or just want someone to sit next to you while you do your homework, please consider another option.

### **6.1.5 MathLab**

The Math Department Mathlab is basically a study room staffed with a few people who know math. These three or four TAs or advanced undergraduate students go from person to person, answering their questions. It is a good place to sit to do your homework if you expect to have a question here and there. However, in general the TAs will only be able to spend a few minutes helping you at a time.

The MathLab is located in Van Vleck B227. It is open on Monday through Thursday from 3:30pm to 8:30pm, and on Sunday from 3:30pm to 6:50pm (note that on Sundays most doors to Van Vleck are locked; you must enter the building through the first floor entrance). This service is free.

### **6.1.6 GUTS tutoring**

GUTS (Greater University Tutoring Service) is a student organization that connects students with volunteer tutors. They offer two types of services: study skills advising, and tutoring. Their main webpage is <http://guts.studentorg.wisc.edu/index.asp>. Their services are free.

If you would like help with study skills, rather than math, GUTS offers free 45-minute meetings with study skills advisors who can help you find your study groove. More information about this service can be found at [http://guts.studentorg.wisc.edu/getatutor\\_studyskills.htm](http://guts.studentorg.wisc.edu/getatutor_studyskills.htm).

GUTS also offers two types of tutoring. They run a drop-in tutoring program, which is a lot like Mathlab (see section above) except that it is in Helen C. White Hall or other buildings (see their website for specifics). They also match groups of students (up to 6) with a tutor for regular help. Note that this last option involves a time commitment of two hours per week. More information about both kinds of tutoring can be found at [http://guts.studentorg.wisc.edu/getatutor\\_academics.htm](http://guts.studentorg.wisc.edu/getatutor_academics.htm).

### **6.1.7 Private tutoring**

If you would prefer one-on-one help with a person of your choosing, you might consider hiring a private tutor. A private tutor will basically do whatever you like: go over concepts and ideas, sit next to you while you do your homework, pick harder problems for you to work on, etc. The Math Department publishes a list of potential tutors as well as their hourly rate at <http://www.math.wisc.edu/tutors>.

### 6.1.8 Mathematics Tutorial Program

This is the most intense help that we offer. This program offers small-group tutoring for two mandatory hours per week, which is spent working on challenging problems at the blackboard. The program is for students who need extra structure and support to pass their math class and have already tried other options. If you think that you could benefit from this program, visit <http://www.math.wisc.edu/~tprogram/index.html>. This service is free.

## 6.2 If something terrible happens

Even math cannot stop life from happening. If you find yourself in a position where your academic studies will be compromised for more than a few days, the most important piece of advice anyone can give you is to contact all of your instructors and your academic advisor as quickly as possible explaining your situation in a clear manner. Give them an idea of when you should be able to return to your studies, and ask for their advice concerning their class. Then follow their advice. (This includes seeing them in their office as soon as possible if they ask you to come talk to them in person!) If you act in a prompt and responsible manner, your instructors will want to help you.

Instructors might offer to make up exams, papers and/or homework, or excuse your absence from exams or mandatory activities. You must be aware that if there is a cumulative component to the class, you will be required to learn the material you have missed. For example, most math classes have a cumulative final exam for which you will have to make sure to be prepared.

If work piles up too high, and it is still before the drop deadline (see <http://www.secfac.wisc.edu/acadcal/> for all academic deadlines) you might consider dropping a few classes. After the drop deadline, if your case is serious enough you can petition the Dean for the privilege to drop classes. At this point you should turn to your academic advisor for help with this process.

In classes in which you are earning a passing grade, an instructor might offer to award you an Incomplete. The grade “Incomplete” would appear in your transcript and be changed to your real grade after you complete the work for the class. Notice that if you have missed exams and your absence has not been excused, your instructor might consider that you are not earning a passing grade in their class. In short, incompletes are not magic, and are granted only in very special circumstances. For more technical information about them, see <http://pubs.wisc.edu/ug/10lettsci/geninfo.html#inc>.

In very rare cases, you might consider withdrawing from school entirely for the rest of the semester. This is definitely something to discuss with your academic advisor. For more information, see <http://pubs.wisc.edu/ug/10lettsci/geninfo.html#with>.

Remember that it is up to you to handle your circumstances in a responsible manner. If you do not take steps to deal with your situation, instructors will have to fail you. For what it means to obtain a grade of “F” in a class, see <http://pubs.wisc.edu/ug/10lettsci/geninfo.html#fail>.