

MA 22300: Online Homework Instructions

Rationale

In the past, the success rate in our lower division service courses (100 and 200 level courses for non-majors) was very low. In fact, in a couple of cases, the percentage of students receiving a W, D or F in the course was as high as 40%–45%. The Mathematics Department was very concerned about these rates and started looking for ways to improve these results. The use of online homework was tested in one course and the result was that this WDF rate dropped from 40% to 19%, with no other changes being made in the course. Since then, online homework has been introduced in many other courses with significant success. For this reason, we will be using online homework in MA 22300 this semester.

Browsers

The online homework system, which is called MathZone, works easiest on a PC using Firefox. Be sure to run the Plug-in Checker, to insure that you have all of the correct programs and settings for using the system. A link is provided for any changes that need to be made to your system. If you need help with the technical requirements of MathZone, you can email support@mathzone.com or call 800-331-5094 and select option 2. The hours live support is available are Sunday, 7 pm – 12 am (midnight); Monday through Thursday, 9 am – 12 am (midnight); Friday, 9 am – 7 pm.

Remember that, if you are having problems with your computer, you cannot miss a homework deadline. Rather, you will need to use an ITaP computer to complete the homework on time. This means that you will want to be sure to attempt each homework before the evening it is due.

Time Zone

All online homeworks are setup using Eastern Standard Time, following daylight savings time. You will want to set your computer to local time, so the homeworks are available and due at the right times.

Registering

A Student QuickStart Guide, that will explain how to register for MathZone, will be emailed to you (using your Purdue email address). Your instructor will supply you with one code. This code is the Student Section Code, which you will need when registering. Additionally, you will be purchasing access to MathZone online, at the MathZone site, with a credit card. As you register, it is **critical** that you select the correct text (as listed on the assignment sheet) and that you enter the Student Section Code exactly as given (it is case sensitive and you will need to type in the dashes). If you have any problems registering, you can email support@mathzone.com or call 800-331-5094 and select option 2.

Completing an Online Homework

The first online assignment is a combination of a palette tutorial that will help you learn how to enter answers and the homework that accompanies Lesson 4. Entering answers is always an issue, but with a little persistence, students do succeed. Often, students are not sure if their answer is wrong, or if it has been entered incorrectly. In over 90% of all such cases, the answers are actually wrong. (In MathZone, the solution will be shown to you after submitting three incorrect answers. It will then be clear what was wrong with your answers. You are then given an opportunity to work another problem, to receive credit on the homework.) Both the palette tutorial and the Lesson 4 homework are due by 7:00 pm on Friday, September 5.

Each homework is due at 7:00 pm on the evening of the class session after the lesson. (The system will show 7:15 pm as the deadline. This is so that differences in clocks/watches do not cause you to be late in submitting the assignment. It is always due at 7:00 pm.) That is, the Monday homework will be due by 7:00 pm on Wednesday, the Wednesday homework will be due by 7:00 pm on Friday, and the Friday homework will be due by 7:00 pm on Monday. This does not give you time to work the entire assignment after class. It only gives you time to finish one or two problems that were difficult for you, which you had to ask your instructor to demonstrate in class (using the text problem that is similar to your online problem; **note** -- your instructor will not work your online problem).

You will have unlimited attempts, until the due date, to earn credit for each problem in the assignment. However, after three incorrect attempts, a solution to your problem will be given and you will have to “Try another” to get credit. **To save your answers and return later to continue an assignment, do not use the Submit button**. Instead, be sure to check the last answer you enter and move to another problem (to lock in your answer). Only when you are completely finished with an assignment and move to another problem (to lock in your last answer) should you use the Submit button. Otherwise, you will have to start the assignment over, with all new problems.

By the way, all assignments are homework, not quizzes (as stated in MathZone). The word “quizzes” is currently hard-coded into the system and will be changed in the next version.

Viewing Results of the Assignment

Immediately after checking an answer, you will be told if your response is correct or incorrect. Unfortunately, the system currently connects showing your actual score for the homework with showing all solutions after the due date. So, **for each homework, you will have to keep track of which answers are correct and which are incorrect**. Correct answers can be changed and credit removed, so please be careful in tracking this. Shortly after the due date, your final score on the homework, along with the solutions to the problems, will be available. All homework assignments are worth 10 points, although the number of problems on each assignment will vary.

If you think you have an answer correct but MathZone is grading it as wrong, you have two options. First, you can answer the question three times so that the solution appears (and you can compare your answer to the correct answer). If you do this, you will have to “Try another” to receive credit for the question. The second option is to leave the answer you believe is correct and lock it in by moving to another question. When the solution appears after the deadline, compare your answer and the correct answer. If they are identical, contact the course coordinator (Devi Nichols; MATH 816; dln@math.purdue.edu). Don't forget that you can also ask about the form of your answer via the Discussion Board (see below).

Excused Homeworks

Online homeworks can only be excused by the course coordinator (see contact info above). The reasons acceptable for excusing a homework are very limited (for example, you added the course late). To request an excused homework, you must contact the coordinator **at the time the problem occurs**. If you are excused from a homework, your MathZone score will not reflect this, as the system is not currently capable of allowing for excused homeworks. The coordinator will adjust your score at the end of the semester.

Help and Technical Support

Do not use the Help button on individual problems when you are having difficulties. It will take a couple of days to get a response to questions asked via this link and is not intended for your use. (Sorry, there is currently no way to keep it off the screen.)

Help with your MathZone questions can be divided into content issues (how do I work this type of math problem), entering answers, and technical issues (I can't log in; my browser keeps locking up; it says to enter an answer, but you already have).

Content Issues:

Content issues can be asked in the Math Help Room (MATH 205), in class (the similar text problem will be worked) and during your instructor's office hours. On the MathZone site, you will find a tab for an Online Tutor who can help you. There is also a tab to link you to the text itself, labeled Self Study. Lastly, you can also get a hint about your problem via the Discussion Board (see below).

Entering Answers:

Questions concerning entering answers should be asked via the Discussion Board (see below).

Technical Issues:

Technical issues are handled by the technical support team at MathZone. Technical support can be contacted via email support@mathzone.com or by calling 800-331-5094 and selecting option 2. If you are having difficulties using your own computer, you must **use an ITaP computer, rather than miss a deadline**. For help in configuring your own computer, also contact technical support.

Discussion Board:

On the Purdue MA 22300 web page, there is a link to a Discussion Board. A live, help assistant is available on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday nights, from 7:00 p.m. till 9:00 p.m. The help assistant will also answer questions during off hours, but the response will not be immediate. On the day an assignment is due, no questions submitted after 5:00 pm will be answered. Previously asked questions, and their answers, can also be viewed on the Discussion board. To enter the Discussion Board, log in using your Purdue career account. You should not try to register.

Changing Sections

Here are the instructions to use if you change sections of the course, after having registered for MathZone. Your new instructor will give you the Student Section code for your new section. When you go to the MathZone site, login. Next, select the Course Management tab (you are in your "old" section at this point), and enter your new Student Section code. You must also notify me that you have switched into his/her section, so I can move all of your previous homework scores to your new section. Be sure to include your name, email address used to register, the section you previously attended and the section you have switched into.