

MA 22400: 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 22400 this semester.

Browsers

To use the online homework system, which is called MathZone, it is critical that your computer setup is compatible with the program. Using an unsupported browser will cause difficulties in entering answers. An unsupported browser may also work fine for a few lessons, but then start causing problems (such as entering the correct answer but having MathZone respond that it is incorrect – this is because the characters you are typing are not being correctly translated to MathZone). For these reasons, **be absolutely sure to run the Plug-in Checker** before working any problems, to insure that you have all of the correct programs and settings. Once the Plug-in Checker has been run, 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 visit www.mhhe.com/support or call 800-331-5094 and select option 2. The hours telephone 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 (with a supported browser) 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

If you purchased MathZone last year, you do not need to purchase it again. You should login with your previous user name and password (call the MathZone support line if you do not remember your user name and/or password). Next, choose the Course Management tab and enter the Student Section Code for this semester. This will complete your registration.

First time users: A powerpoint presentation, that explains how to register for MathZone, is available on the course web page (www.math.purdue.edu/MA22400). Two codes are needed to register. Your instructor will supply one code. This code is the Student Section Code. Additionally, you must purchase access to MathZone. If you purchase a new text, MathZone is included. If you are unable to buy a text right away (and plan to use the reserve text in the undergrad library), you can purchase just the code either at the bookstore, or using the MathZone site (a credit card will be needed). Note that it will be less expensive to purchase MathZone online than at the bookstore. As you register, be sure 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 visit www.mhhe.com/support or call 800-331-5094 and select option 2.

Before the next class meeting, you must register for this semester's MathZone, so you will be ready for the first online assignment.

Completing an Online Homework

The first online assignment is the homework that accompanies Lesson 5. 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 95% of all such cases, the answers are actually wrong. (In MathZone, the answer 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.) The Lesson 5 homework is due by 7:00 pm on Friday, September 4.

Each homework is due at 7:00 pm on the evening of the class session after the lesson. 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 deadline, 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. A Hint button is also provided, to assist you if you are having difficulty working the problem.

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 entered, move to another problem (to lock in your answer) and log out at the top of the page. 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. Each time you re-enter an assignment, only the problems that have not been answered correctly will appear. Once you Submit an assignment, you can still re-enter the assignment. However, this time, you will get new versions of the problems that have not yet been answered correctly. At the deadline for the assignment, your assignment will automatically be submitted, in case you forget to use the Submit button.

By the way, all assignments are homework, not quizzes (as stated on the Submit button). 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. Shortly after the due date, your final score on the homework, along with the answers to the problems (showing both your answers and the correct answers), 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 answer appears and you can compare your answer to the correct answer. (*Note: if the answer seems to be the same as what you entered, please see*

the note at the end of the handout.) 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 answer appears after the deadline, compare your answer and the correct answer. If they are identical, contact the MathZone coordinator (Bogume Jang; bjang@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 MathZone coordinator (Bogume Jang; bjang@math.purdue.edu). The reasons acceptable for excusing a homework are very limited (for example, you added the course late or were ill). 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. To excuse more than three homeworks, students must provide documentation of a serious personal illness or family emergency (these are the only accepted reasons for additional excused homeworks). Those students with fewer than three excused homeworks will have lowest scores dropped for the balance of the three. **Note:** This is not in addition to your excused absences. It is the balance of the three not needed for excused absences.

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, etc.).

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 by visiting www.mhhe.com/support 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 22400 web page, there is a link to a Discussion Board. The MathZone coordinator will be available “live” to answer questions on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday nights, from 9:00 p.m. till 11:00 p.m. via the board. The coordinator 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. (Remember that the MathZone resources are still available

to help you.) 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 the MathZone Coordinator (Bogume Jang; bjang@math.purdue.edu) that you have switched into the new section, so she can move all of your previous homework scores. Be sure to include your name, email address used to register, the section you previously attended and the section you have switched into.

Helpful Advice

If you enter an answer that is graded as incorrect, but after three attempts, the MathZone answer is the same as what you entered:

-- what is usually happening in this case is that the connection from your session to the written memory for MathZone has been corrupted; what you are seeing on your screen is not being written to your MathZone record; MathZone is grading your previous, incorrect answer; please logout, wait a minute and log back in; a second possibility is that you are not using a supported browser (even though it may have worked on previous assignments); so, next check your browser; if this does not remedy the problem, contact the MathZone support team

If you are having trouble entering exponents in complicated expressions:

-- this is usually a browser issue, although it appears to be a Mac issue as well; one way around the problem (without reconfiguring your computer) is to enter all of the expressions first, then go back and enter all of the exponents using the exponent feature on the palette

If the answer box disappears:

-- if you logout and back in, the answer box may reappear; in general, this is a problem best answered by the MathZone support team

If, in general, MathZone has been working fine and then suddenly ceases to work appropriately (asks you to input an answer, but you already have; the palette doesn't appear but is needed; only part of the problem appears on the screen):

-- often, you are using an unsupported browser; the browser was fine for entering simple answer, but more complicated ones are not translated correctly to MathZone; so, first check your browser to be sure you are using a supported one; if you are, contact the MathZone support team