

Succeeding in Your First Semester



Know the expectations

Missing the minimum has an immediate consequence. Meeting the expectation is what makes your college years successful.



Practice professionalism

After graduation you step into a professional career. The professionalism it demands is a habit you start practicing now.



Math builds on math

Every math course is built on the one before it. Review what you learned and practice it every day, until it is truly yours.

The entire Applied Mathematics department — and UC Merced — wants you to succeed. In turn, take your learning and your classes seriously.

What We Expect From You

1



Know your instructors, professors, and TAs — names and email addresses.

2



Go to all classes and discussion sections, even when attendance is not taken.

3



Attend every class and take your own notes.

4



Read and understand every course syllabus.

5



Work every homework problem, even when it is not collected or graded.

6



Be active and engaged in your classes.

7



Know how to write email correctly and professionally.

8



Listen and follow instructions and guidelines in your classes.

9



Ask questions in lecture, office hours, and discussion sections.

Professionalism: Emailing an Instructor

Not like this

Subject:

hey

*i cant make the midterm friday, something came up.
can i take it some other day? thanks*

Sent the night before

No subject line, no course or section, no date, no reason, no proposed fix — and no name.

Like this

Subject: MATH 032 — Midterm conflict, Oct 17

Dear Professor Kim,

I am in your MATH 032 section (MW 9:00 a.m.). I have a documented medical appointment during the Oct 17 midterm and can send the confirmation.

Would sitting the exam on Oct 16 or 18 be possible? I can come whenever works for you.

Thank you, Jane Doe (ID 1234567)

Sent two weeks ahead, specific, documented, and it proposes a solution.

Check the syllabus first — the answer is often already there.

If it is not, write early, name the course and date, give the reason, and propose a solution.

Asking for Help

Do not get discouraged if the lectures and homework seem difficult — there are lots of resources and people to help you succeed in your classes.

Asking early is a strategy, not a weakness.

Office Hours

- Your instructor's and TA's hours are the fastest path to an answer.
- Bring a specific question — even a wrong attempt is a good start.
- Go even without a question — you learn from classmates' questions.

Learning Assistants

- Math classes (MATH 005, 008, 021, 022) have undergraduate peer Learning Assistants who are there to help you during lectures.

STEM Tutoring Hub and the Math Center

- Drop-in tutoring and study support for your STEM courses, including math, chemistry, biology, CSE, physics, and engineering.
- Math Center: SSB 320
- Free!

Be careful with using AI tools

While these tools are helpful in some cases, they can seriously hinder your logical and critical thinking, which are crucial for learning. We cannot overemphasize the importance of practicing solving math problems — AI is not a substitute for doing homework problems.