

Should I buy a calculator?

You will not use a calculator on the exams in Math 104. They may be of limited use on some homework problems.

Should I buy the tutoring material called MyMathLab.com that is listed in the textbook?

No. I have looked at the offering at MyMathLab.com and I feel that the material I want you to have will be delivered in class lectures. The additional methods and other materials are not necessary.

Why do you usually assign odd numbered problems?

All odd numbered problems have answers in the back of the textbook. I want you to be able to verify that you have done your work properly and have ended with the final, correct answer. The review sections of the text have all answers in the back of the book. Many of the homework pages I have produced contain some (or all) of the answers to help you verify that you have learned the concept.

Why do you teach some methods in the class that are not in the textbook?

The methods included in the textbook are popular methods but I do not consider all of them to be the best methods. I believe we need to work "with the least opportunity for error." My methods emphasize this while allowing the student to solve an even wider range of problems than was originally intended by the textbook authors.

Should I hire a private tutor?

Probably not.

1. Generally tutors are hired not to tutor the subject but to enforce a dedicated, uninterrupted time to practice a subject such as algebra. Since you are paying for the tutor's time, you will not want to waste your money on idle chatting.
2. The better tutors are not sympathetic to whining about how hard you think a concept is or about how you should have earned 4 points on a problem instead of only 2. Their job includes convincing their client that the client must be one who actually does all the work. Learning is an active endeavor not a passive activity.
3. Some tutors try to help by either showing you how they do a particular problem or by telling you each step to take. This looks good but is not very effective. The best tutors will ask you more questions than you ask them. They should ask you "Why did you do that?", "How is this different (or similar) to another problem", "What does this mean?" Their responses to your answers are the actual tutoring.

How are exams conducted?

The exam begins 15 minutes after the beginning of class and lasts for 60 minutes. No books, notes, calculators, etc are allowed to be used during the exam. The exam is printed (usually) on a single sheet of paper. This single sheet of paper is a questions-list and has a place for your name and the date. You will turn in the filled-in question-list with your work. Your work must be on 8.5 by 11 inch pieces of paper. The entire exam (question list and your effort) must be turned in by the ending time for the exam. We have a 10-minute break and then we continue with the remainder of class. We do not have a quiz on Exam nights.

When are exams returned?

Exams are returned before class on the next class meeting after the exam was conducted. The final exam is returned ONLY if the student supplies a stamped, self-addressed envelope at the time of the final exam.

Why do you not have make-up exams?

I offer 4 regular, one-hour exams during the semester. The best 3 exams are used in computing the semester grade. If you missed an exam, it is simply the one exam we do not use.

How are exams graded?

I look for evidence that you have learned the concept being tested. That evidence is the method you used to solve the problem. While the final answer is expected to be correct, that is also the least valued item of the work you will have done. "Answer only" usually earns no credit at all.

What is my current grade?

A student who already knows that their grade is low and is hoping that they are wrong in their own assessment usually asks this question.

I only compute grades at the end of the semester. As is stated in the syllabus, each of 3 regular exams count 20%; homework and quizzes count 20% and the final exam is the last 20%.

Part way through the semester you might estimate your grade by computing the average of your exam grades. If your homework average is higher than 90% you could add a letter grade to the average of your exam grades. If your homework average is less than 70% you should subtract a letter grade from that average.

Remember that this is just a guess about your grade. Only *you* know how hard *you* are working and how much effort *you* are making to learn.

Should I expect to get out of class early?

No. We have a very limited amount of time to cover a very wide range of material so there are no "slack days". We start on time and exit on time. Please make your plans accordingly.

Where can I get help?

Students can download and/or print the PDF class lecture notes after the lecture has been presented (in most cases). Some of these notes contain examples done in class and have annotations as well.

Work with your classmates. Introduce yourself. Get to know them and do some of your homework with them – both you and they will benefit.

There is a Math Lab on the main campus. The staff is composed of teachers as well as students who can help. You might suggest that they look at the lecture notes from this site.

This is a useful site: <http://www.algebra.com/>

Students can email questions to me at math104@mumaugh.com. Be sure to fully identify the page and problem number and provide a brief description of the efforts you have made toward solution.