

A Guideline for Teaching Online Math Courses,

by Xianwei Van Harpen

There are many misconceptions about teaching online courses. For example, some instructors think that one is lucky to teach an online class because students just need to work on their own. The truth is that students don't always know how to learn on their own. In fact, they need more support because of the lack of face-to-face interaction with the instructor. Also, some instructors think weekly reminders are just a waste of time as students would just get tired of them. In my experience, my online students are very grateful of the regular reminders. Below, I listed all the things that worked well in my teaching of online math courses. I believe they will help future instructors and students have a very positive experience with online math courses.

Golden advice 1: Not all students check emails.

Golden advice 2: Students don't always understand the message you send them the first time they read it. Repeated emails are necessary.

*Golden advice 3: Since we are paid the same amount of money without lecturing or grading, we really should have more patience and take the time to send nice emails to our students. If necessary, we should **call** individual students to find out why they are not making progress.*

1. Before the semester starts, email your students the following:

- A welcome letter with a brief introduction of yourself, how you want to be addressed (Ms. Smith, Mr. Smith, Dr. Smith, etc.), and the best way to reach you (email, phone, office hours, etc.)
- Feel free to send a picture of yourself and even your family to your students
- Syllabus
- Course calendar (with detailed due dates)
- Instruction on how to sign up on the online learning system

Note 1: Since students continue to register after your initial email, you need to keep checking your router on PAWS and email the new students the things above. You can stop once the deadline to add to your course is past due.

Note 2: Upload all the materials onto D2L, even if your online learning system has a resource function

2. How to email your students

- Panther list is your best friend. Just to make sure it has the right setting. Otherwise it does not allow attachments.
- Copy and paste your students' email address (you will need to keep updating the list as students drop or add)
- Always use "bcc" instead of "to" or "cc"
- ALEKS email does not allow students to email you back directly

3. If you are an online learning system

- Windows “Snipping Tool” is your best friend
- For ALEKS users, provide course code to your students (XXXXXX-XXXXXX) and your students need to purchase an access code (XXXXXX-XXXXXX-XXXXXX-XXXXXX)
- Provide detailed instruction on how to “learn” via the system: watch videos, read the e-book, complete the homework/quizzes/tests/practices
- Provide instruction/samples on writing down steps in a nice binder or notebook instead of loose scratch papers
- Provide instruction on how to check gradebook on the system
- Provide customer support email or phone number in case students get into trouble with the system and you are not available or not capable of helping out

Note: All the information should be uploaded on D2L, too.

4. Keep active and regular communication with your students

- Get yourself into the habit of sending regular emails on homework, quizzes, etc. It is hard to remember assignment due dates for online students. It doesn't take long to do that once you have a panther list created and memorized.
- Don't be afraid of calling some of your students if necessary. You can download a list of student addresses and phone numbers on PAWS. Use a campus phone.
- Make sure your students hear from you at least once a week!

5. Mid-term exam and final exam

- Ask the department to reserve a computer lab for your mid-term exam. If necessary, request two days (Kim usually will get this done a few weeks into the semester. Just use “TBA” on the syllabus and calendar)
- If your class size is bigger than the capacity of the computer lab, offer two or three sections of the exam per day and ask students to sign up on one of them. (for example, 9:00-noon, 1:00-4:00)
- Make sure to schedule the first mid-term exam before the university drop date. Final exams must be given during the university final exam period. Make sure to stick to the scheduled date to give the exam.
- Make sure you figure out the midterm and final dates and reserve the rooms BEFORE the term starts, and put the correct dates/times on the syllabus you give to the students at the start of the term!
- For students who cannot come to the exam on campus, allow local proctoring. You will receive a sample proctor form template. Modify it to include your class # and your name / email! If you aren't using aleks you'll need to modify it as appropriate for your course. If you are using an online final exam, make sure to use a password for the exam. Call or email the proctors to share the password.

- Make sure to check photo IDs before the exam. If a student forgets to bring his or her photo ID, take a picture of the student with your phone or a camera and tell them to email a picture of their photo ID so you can see if the two pictures show the same person.

Appendix A: How to use pantherLIST

- Step 1: Go to www4.uwm.edu
- Step 2: Click more on the top right corner
- Step 3: Click pantherLIST
- Step 4: log in
- Step 5: Click “Class Email List” at the left bottom
- Step 6: Pick the class list and created the list



Appendix B: How to find the “Snipping Tool”

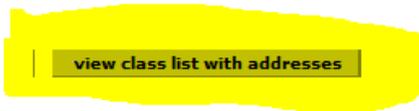
- Step 1: Go to “all programs”
- Step 2: Go to “Accessories”
- Step 3: Click “Snipping Tool”



Appendix C: How to find students’ phone numbers

- Step 1: go to PAWS and find your class roster
- Step 2: at the bottom of the list, you will see “view class list with addresses”

3.00	Actuarial Science - Int	Sophomore	
3.00	Business Undergraduate - Marketing - Int	Freshman	
3.00	Business Undergraduate - Human Resources - Int	Freshman	
3.00	Nursing Undergraduate - Nursing - Int	Freshman	



Appendix D: Welcome letter

Dear student, welcome to Math xxx-xxx!

I am your instructor Mrs. Xianwei Van Harpen. Please feel free to address me as Mrs. Van Harpen, or simply Xianwei (pronounces “Shenway”).

In this course, we are going to use a Web-based, artificially intelligent assessment and learning system called **Assessment and LEarning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS)**. To make sure that you have a successful semester, it is important that you get the following two things done before the first day of the semester **Monday, Jan. 25th, 2016**:

- Have an ALEKS account active (see detailed instruction in the syllabus)
- Complete the initial assessment on ALEKS. I suggest that you take the initial assessment seriously as it will show how much of the course content you have already mastered.

If you have any question about the course at this point, please feel free to email me. I look forward to working with you this semester and help you succeed in this course.

Your instructor: Mrs. Van Harpen

Email: xxxxxx

Work phone: xxxxxxxxxxx

Office: xxxxxx

Appendix E: Email template for weekly reminders

Hi Math 098 online class,

Just a reminder that, as usual, you have homework due on ALEKS tomorrow (Friday).

Let me know if you have any questions. I am here for you!

Have a great day!

Xianwei

Appendix F: Email to exam proctors

Hi, Stacy,

To proctor the exam for Kasey Smith, you will need the password "**xxxxxxxx**" to unlock the exam "Online Math 098 Final Exam". The student is allowed to have 3 hours for the exam.

Please make sure to not share the password with anybody.

During the exam, the student can use a scientific calculator. No graphing calculator is allowed. The student should not have any device that is connected to the internet, including cell phones. Scratch papers are allowed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at xxxxxxxxxxx or email me at xxxxxxxxxxx

Thanks!

Xianwei Van Harpen

Van Harpen 5/17/16

Appendix G: Email for exam sign-ups

Hi, Math 098 online students!

I hope you had a great weekend!

As listed in the syllabus, our mid-term exam is coming up on Thursday, Mar. 10th. You are required to come to campus to take the exam in a computer lab (EMS E425) on ALEKS. **There are limited number of seats in the lab. Please let me know which session below works for you before Friday, Feb. 26th.**

Session 1: 9:00 a.m. to noon

Session 2: 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Location: EMS Building E425

Only a scientific calculator is allowed. No graph calculator is allowed.

If you cannot make it to the exam on campus, there is an option of using other proctors to take the exam off campus. You will need to get the approval process completed no later than Mar. 3rd. I will explain to you more if you are interested.

Hope to hear from you soon!

Mrs. Van Harpen

Appendix H: Proctor Approval Form (You will receive a Word version)

UWM – Math 098 Online Course Spring 2016
Instructor: vanharpe@uwm.edu

PROCTOR APPROVAL FORM

Print this form. This form must be presented by the student to the proctor, in person.

Criteria for designated proctors (please check the appropriate category for the person named below):

- A University or college testing center
- A university or college faculty member
- A school administrator, school psychologist, or other school official
- A professional librarian
- A Tutoring and learning center
- A military officer

Note: Proctors may NOT be relatives, close personal friends, or other students. All exam information will be sent via email and/or to the proctor's place of business. If none of the above categories are feasible, contact me as soon as possible.

To be completed by the STUDENT – Please print clearly or type:

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Current Daytime phone _____

Note to Proctor: Thank you for serving as a proctor for our online student(s)! Please complete the form below and return it to Xianwei Van Harpen via email at vanharpe@uwm.edu as soon as possible. Once approved, the exam directions will be sent to you two days prior to the exam date. The exam will be given online. The student must bring his/her own computer or verify that ALEKS works on the computer provided before the exam time. The student is responsible for bringing clean (unmarked) paper and graph paper as well as a valid UWM photo ID. Only a scientific calculator is allowed for the exam. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Xianwei Van Harpen at vanharpe@uwm.edu.

To be completed by PROCTOR – Please print clearly or type AND check the appropriate category above:

Name _____
Title/Position _____
Company/Business Name _____
Company/Business Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Daytime Phone Number _____ Daytime Fax Number _____
E-mail _____
Date of the exam _____
Starting time _____
Ending time _____
Exam location if not at your place of business _____

I have met the above named student and I agree to proctor examinations for this student in accordance with the written directions provided by the instructor. I certify that the information on this form is true and complete, and that I am not a relative or close personal friend of the student named above, and I am not a student. I understand that inaccurate or misleading information may affect the student's academic status at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. I also agree to notify the instructor immediately if any of the above information or circumstances change. **Note: Exam information will not be submitted to a proctor until the proctor has been approved.**

Proctor's Signature _____ Date _____

Please keep this copy of the form for your records, should questions arise.