

Guidelines for writing up homework solutions

Tim Chumley*

January 26, 2026

One skill that we will work on developing is the ability to clearly and effectively communicate mathematical ideas. To help you develop this skill, I am asking you to think about these guidelines as you write and submit your work. This will also help with giving better feedback on your work.

- Your handwriting should be legible and scans should be clear.
- Leave a visible separation between problems.
- Leave the top of each page and margins blank for feedback.
- For problems beyond a simple computation, you need to write in complete sentences. It takes lots of practice to develop a mathematical voice, but there are three things you can keep in mind to help. The first is that clarity should always be the first priority. That might mean being more succinct when something seems straightforward, or it might mean taking your time and giving a longer explanation when something feels complicated. Second: it's ok to mimic the style of mathematical writing you've seen before, like in a textbook. Third: it's ok to rely on the writing skills you've developed outside of math.
- It's good practice to first work out the solution on scratch paper, and then neatly write up a final draft. On simple problems, your first draft will probably be good enough to submit, but on harder problems, the first draft is rarely clear enough.
- Keep the following potential audiences in mind: your instructor, who wants to see your understanding and wants to help; your classmates, who you're trying to explain your thought process to; your future self, who is using the assignment to review.

My goal in providing these guidelines is for you to turn in neat, complete assignments that are easy to read, self-contained, and can be looked back upon as study tools.

*These guidelines are adapted from math.hmc.edu/homework