

How to lose marks

- Be messy! Cram all your work in a tiny space, write illegibly, with a faint pencil or pen, tear the pages from your notebook unevenly (I hate ragged edges!) ...
- Use sloppy or incorrect notation, such as “ \rightarrow ” when you mean “ $=$ ”. (Remember that “ \rightarrow ” has a meaning very different from “ $=$ ”; and “ $=$ ” itself has a very definite meaning: it doesn’t just mean “I’m pausing a moment while I decide what next to write”. Write “ $=$ ” when you mean “equals” (literally), and not otherwise.)
- Hand in your assignment looking as if you just finished it in the first few minutes of class; have it look as if your dog tried to eat it, but didn’t like the taste, so spit it out again; generally have it look as if you’ve no pride in it, and have no belief in its worth. For sure, I’ll agree with you in that case.
(If you don’t respect your work, why should you expect me to?)
- Just give your answer, with no justification. Obviously I don’t know the answer, so I’m depending on you to let me know what it is! (In case my sarcasm isn’t obvious, see my comment below!)

How not to lose marks

- Read questions carefully, and answer them *as asked*. Don’t invent a new (possibly related) question and answer that one instead, hoping I won’t notice. (I will!)
- Give your answer, fully justified. I already know the answer, so it’s not the answer I need to know — it’s your thought processes I’m interested in seeing. Show me how you got your answer.
- Write what you mean. Don’t misuse the notation, don’t invent your own (or if you do, clearly explain it), and don’t make me guess your meaning (I’ll assume you meant what you wrote). Avoid lazy usages like $\frac{\sin}{\cos}(x)$ when you mean $\frac{\sin(x)}{\cos(x)}$. If you use abbreviations, explain them (unless they are either standard abbreviations or ones I’ve used in class, so we all know them). And please: write “ $=$ ” only when you really mean “equals”, and don’t write a different symbol with a different meaning (such as \rightarrow) when you really mean “ $=$ ”.
- Write what you mean (still!). For example, don’t use a “stream-of-consciousness” technique, resulting in something like this: “ $\sin x = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} = \frac{\pi}{4}$ ”, when what you mean is “ $\sin x = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}$ so $x = \frac{\pi}{4}$ ”.
- Don’t leave your homework till the last minute — plan ahead! (Bonus: if you plan ahead, you’ll have time to ask questions about the work, instead of having a panic at the last minute when you discover you don’t know how to do some problems!)
- Put your full name on every page not attached to other pages, and for sure on the first page. Staple all the pages together, in order.
- Write clearly, in a reasonable size (not cramped into a tiny space), and with legible handwriting (so I can easily read your answers). Use a good pen or pencil (*i.e.* legible). If I have to struggle to read your work, I’ll be in a bad mood, and may well take it out on you in my marking! Avoid this at all costs!