Course Information

Welcome to 6.042! In this course, we’ll teach you some mathematics that we think you’ll find useful in your study of computer science. This handout contains basic information about the class, but all this and more is also available on the course website:

https://courses.csail.mit.edu/6.042/fall14/

Prerequisites. The only prerequisite is 18.01. If you have already taken 18.310 or 6.046, then you should not take 6.042.

Lecture. There are 90-minute lectures on Tuesday and Thursday in 26-100 at 2:30 PM.

Recitation. There are 1-hour mandatory recitations on Wednesday and Friday focused on solving problems in small groups. Please enter your preferences for recitation section on the course website today (Thursday) by 7:30PM. We will try to have section assignments posted tonight by 10PM.

Office hours. Everyone on the course staff has office hours every week. Times and locations will be posted on the course website.

Reading. The text is Mathematics for Computer Science. A draft copy is available through the course website. Reading will be assigned each week with the problem sets.

Homework. There is a problem set each week, for a total of 11. Problem sets are generally released on Tuesday, due the following Monday evening at 7:30PM in the locked boxes at the elevator lobby in 32-G5, and is returned in recitation on Friday. Be neat! Graders may deduct for sloppiness. Late homework is generally not accepted.

Each problem will be submitted separately, so don’t staple your solutions together. Make sure that everything you submit has your name, your recitation number, your recitation instructor’s name, and a collaboration statement on it.

Collaboration. You are welcome to work with other students on homework, but your writeup must be entirely your own. Please do not refer to course materials from previous terms. On the top of your homework, list:

- all collaborators, other than course staff
- all written sources that you consulted, other than the text and course handouts

Exams. There are a 2-hour midterm in class on 10/21 and a 3-hour final during finals week.
Grading. We compute a percentage score based on your coursework and then assign a letter grade as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>88.0 - 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>75.0 - 87.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60.0 - 74.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50.0 - 59.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 50%</td>
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</tbody>
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Your percentage score is the weighted average of your scores in four areas:

Homework (30%) We drop your lowest score.

Recitation (20%) Each recitation is worth 0, 1, or 2 points. If you attend for the full period and work constructively with your team, then you get 2 points. If you miss part of the recitation or glaringly fail to work constructively with your team, then you get 1 point. If you are absent, you get 0 points. We drop your two lowest recitation scores.

Midterm (25%), Final (35%) If the class median on an exam is below 75% (which is typical), then we normalize all scores upward so that the median is 75%. We normalize by adding a fixed number of points to every score. Scores are not capped at 100%. If the median on an exam is above 75%—fantastic!

The weights listed above total 110%; we’ll cut 10% off the weight of your weakest exam.

How to Succeed. We want everyone to get the best possible grade within the bounds of fairness. There is no curve; in principle, everyone could get an A. Here are some suggestions on how you can do well:

- Attend recitation! If you show up on time, stay the whole hour, and work constructively with teammates, then you’ve got 20% in the bag.
- Attend lecture! We’ll explain every topic in the course and take your questions. If you follow lecture, then *Mathematics for Computer Science* is the only essential reading all term!
- Collaborate with other students on the homework. Some problems in 6.042 are tricky and sharing insights can save you a lot of time.
- Rely on your recitation instructor. Attend office hours, which are also a good opportunity to find collaborators.
- Exams are typically tough. The best preparation is to do your best on each homework and go over your mistakes afterward with your recitation instructor.
- If you are having one of those terms and you’re getting buried by 6.042, MIT, and life at large, then come talk to us and we’ll see if we can help you out.

Good luck and we hope you enjoy the class!