

Time Management for COSC-311 HW

The homework assignments for COSC-311 are relatively long; usually there are three problems in which, for each, you'll need to think about a brand new problem, design an algorithm to solve that problem, explain why your algorithm is correct, and analyze the runtime of your algorithm. It will take time to reflect on these problems and to think up and write down your solution. We give you two weeks to work on each homework assignment for a reason!

When the assignment is first posted, the due date might feel like it's ages away. But the day before the assignment is due, I promise that you'll wish you'd started it earlier! To help you plan your time for these longer assignments, I offer one possible schedule for a homework assignment that goes out on a Friday and is due two weeks later. Think of this as a suggestion, not a rule; at no point will I ask for you to submit intermediate work.

- Over the weekend: read through the assignment and make sure you understand what all of the problems are asking you to do. Note any questions you have and any preliminary ideas on how to approach the problems.
- Sun-Tues, week 1: post your clarifying questions on the Moodle forum or come to office hours.
- Weds-Fri, week 1: aim to have one problem complete. Pick whichever problem comes most easily to you, and draft your solution. But don't forget about the other two problems! Because you read through them the previous weekend and got your initial questions answered, you can let these simmer in your mind.
- Middle weekend: push the remaining two problems as far as you can. Keep track of any questions that come up, what ideas worked and didn't work, and anything else you'd like to discuss with your classmates. Set up a meeting with your study group for early in the week.
- Sun-Tues, week 2: meet with your study group to discuss how you approached the homework problems. Your goal should be to get everyone in your group to reach an understanding of a possible solution. Sometimes this will mean that you'll learn a lot from your study group, when others have ideas for how to approach a problem on which you were stuck. Other times this will mean that you take the lead in helping your group understand a solution that you figured out earlier.
- Tues-Weds, week 2: draft your solutions to any remaining problems.
- Thurs, week 2: read through your drafted solutions and make revisions. Remember, one of your goals is to communicate your solution clearly and concisely, so this is a time to work on your writing in addition to your algorithms!

Office hours:

Section 1 (Prof. Gardner): Monday 2-3:30pm and Wednesday 4-5:30pm

Section 2 (Prof. McGeoch): Tuesday 3-4:30pm and Wednesday 1-2:30pm

TA sessions (both sections, Kathleen and Jack): Sunday 5-7pm and Thursday 6:30-8:30pm