

# WHS: The University of Kentucky Web Homework System

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WHS is a web-based instructional support system operated in the public interest by the University of Kentucky Department of Mathematics and The University of Kentucky Information Systems. Its primary functions are the distribution of supplemental instructional materials such as web pages and streaming video, and the hosting of sets of homework assignments. It was developed and is employed solely to assist traditional classroom instruction by conserving teacher time through automation of routine tasks, and the facilitation of communication and collaboration.

There are three main categories of WHS users: students, teachers, and authors. Anyone can become a student simply by registering as a new user. Students participate in classes created and managed

by teachers using materials created by authors. “Real” teachers at non-profit public and private institutions (all levels) can become teachers and authors on WHS. There are no charges for the accounts or for system usage for non-commercial educational or public service functions.

**Note on Browsers:** Some features of mathclass.com depend on modern browsers such as Netscape 6.0 or higher and Internet Explorer 5.1 or higher. Users of older browsers may find that some buttons do not work. For the most part these are shortcuts and the basic functionality will be available.

# WHS Student Usage

## Acquiring and Getting Started With Your WHS Student Account

Use of WHS requires an account. You may already have an account by virtue of your registration for certain classes or you may need to create your own account. In either case the first step is to select the “Web Homework” link on the mathclass.com main page. You will be presented with a login screen



### **Case 1. You don't have an account or are not sure whether you have an account.**

In this case select “Register as a New User” and complete the form. If an account already exists which is identified either by your student number (social security number in most cases) or email address then the system will return a message to that effect. If you receive such a message go to Case 2, below.



There are a number of items which may need clarification.

You can actually use any school in the “Select Your School Menu”. Thus if your school isn’t there or the name used isn’t familiar simply select any school (e.g. University of Kentucky) to get started. This is something you can always change at any time.

The student number (social security number) must be 9-digit number which is not already in use as an identifier. Its sole use is as a unique account identifier within the system. It actually need not be the social security number and you can provide a random number which will work provided no other account is already identified with it.

**The email address is very important.** If you do not have one then you should get one (e.g. from hotmail.com) and use it. For immediate purpose of registration you can use a fake email address. For instance if Mary M. Mullins is a student at Ludwig Beethoven High School she might use Mary\_M\_Mullins@ludwig\_beethoven.k12.ky.us which is highly unlikely to be in use by any other student with a WHS account. **DO NOT USE SOMEONE ELSE’S EMAIL ADDRESS** since (1) email sent to you by the system will be directed to that address and (2) your email address becomes your login.

If there are no problems with your student number or email your account will be created immediately with your email address as login and your social security (or student) number as password.

**If the system tells you that someone else already has an account with that email or student number** then that person is almost certainly you. Most likely an account was created for you by virtue of your pre-registration in a class. Such accounts will have your student number as both the login and password. Go to case 2, below, and attempt to log in with your student number as both login id and password. If you are not able to log in this way then send a help message by pressing the “Help” button on the bar below the picture on the login screen. It may have happened that someone accidentally entered your social security number or email.

Assuming you have no problems you will receive the following screen which will, among other things, remind you that you will need to add at least one class in order to use your account and that you should change your password.



The “start” button at the bottom will take you to the main WHS screen..

## **Case 2. You already have an account (including when you have just been through case 1).**

If your account already exists but you don't know the login or password (e.g. if it was created because of your registration in a class) then your login and password will both be your student or social security number. In all other cases your initial login will be your email address and your password your student or social security number.

Select the “Web Homework” link on the mathclass.com main page and log in. This will take you to the WHS Main Page. There is a vertical row of eight links on the left of the page. Your student account will give you access to the resources addressed by the top six.

## **Lifetime of a Student Account**

Unless there is an academic reason to do otherwise all student accounts (and all classes) are routinely deleted at the end of each term. This generally happens during Christmas break, in early June, and in mid-August.

## **To get Started**

Select the “Assignments” link. If your account was created from registration information you should be able to select your class(es) in the “Select Class” menu. Otherwise (e.g. if you registered as a new user) you will see “No Classes” listed.



In order to participate in WHS as a student you must register for at least one class.

## Adding and Dropping Classes

To add or drop a class select “Add/Drop Classes” at the WHS Main Page. The “Select Class” menu lists all classes available at your school. You can add any class “For Browsing” or “For Registration”.

If you add for browsing you will be able to submit any of the assignments for evaluation by the system but the results will not be sent to the teacher of the class, nor will any questions or comments you make be sent to the teacher. Your results will, however be retained by the system and you will be able to view them at any time.

If you request registration in a course then:

you automatically add it for browsing. However in addition a request is sent to the teacher for admission to the class.

If the teacher subsequently admits you then all of your results, including results on assignments done before the teacher admits you, will be presented to the teacher.



**You should not casually request registration for a class since any teacher of a class for which a student is registered can change the password of that student.** This feature of the system is there to guard against forgotten student passwords and to prevent students who are not serious from draining teacher time and system resources.

## **Registration in Class At Other Schools**

You can register for any class listed at any school in the system. Select the bar at the bottom of the “Add/Drop” to get a screen at which you can select another school and be presented the available classes at that school. The choice of adding for browsing or registration is the same. The check box labeled “Include Course List Names” is a convenience for other teachers. If it is checked some extra information is appended to the name of the class which tells other instructors how to create their own versions of the class in question.

## **Registration in Multiple Classes**

You can register in any number of classes at any number of schools for browsing or registration.

## **Dropping a Class**

The “Drop Class” menu on the “Drop/Add” screen works exactly as one would expect. However you can only drop a class for which your status is “browsing”. If your registration for a class has been approved by the teacher then in order for you to drop the class the teacher must withdraw that approval and restore your status to “browsing”.

## **Class Announcements**

At the announcements link at the top of the main screen the student can access three categories of information related to each class.

The class announcement window contains class routine information of the type a teacher might write on the blackboard to remind students of upcoming tests, daily assignments, changes in schedule, etc.



The class homepage is a link to a class page maintained by the teacher which typically contains structured class information such as the syllabus, additional links to resources, etc.

The course homepage contains general information important to all students in all classes or sections of the course. It contains material such as course objectives, uniform exam schedules, etc. which are not specific to any one class or section.

## Assignments

Students participate in WHS classes by working on assignments and communicating with the teacher.

To work on the assignments for a class select “Assignments” at the WHS main screen then select the class and assignment. The “Display Assignment” bar will cause the assignment to be presented on the screen.

Assignments are typically in the form of a set of problems with which students can interact by providing responses in a variety of answer formats. Some aspects of the assignments are:

## Version Numbers

There is a “Version Number” line immediately beneath the name of the assignment. This is used for assignments which do not have a unique form. For instance some courses employ assignments which are practice examination generators. Each time they are called they present a random sample of problems based on the material for an upcoming exam. Each random exam comes associated with a number called the version from which the system can re-construct that particular exam. This permits teachers to point groups of students to a single version for discussion, provides for individual homework assignments (or examinations) on the same material for each student, and supports web-based class-placement and large-scale diagnostic examinations such as the Kentucky Early Mathematics Testing Program (KEMTP). There is no harm in entering a version number for an assignment which has only one form.

## Video and Html Links

Certain problems may contain embedded html links to hints or supplemental material. The most common use of this feature is brief streaming video links of a minute or two which contain a solution to the given problem or a similar one. The current video links in assignments require a data rate of at least 100k bps and will not work on convention 20k dialup connections.

## **Working an Assignment**

Embedded links notwithstanding WHS assignments are generally intended to be printed out and worked in a conventional manner with answers checked when students connect back to the system and enter them at a later time. (In cases where there are multiple forms of the assignment the version number appears on the printout.) However the majority of the assignments are presented so that the system will immediately return the correct answer to a question upon checking the one submitted by the student. This is equivalent to permitting the student to “look at the answer in the back of the book” and it is not uncommon for students to extract the correct answers before attempting the problems.

When assignments are presented in this format it is in keeping with the use of the system as a “low stakes” activity (like conventional homework) with acceptance by the student of responsibility for interacting in a manner which best suits their learning style and needs.

When responses are entered to some or all of the questions in an assignment and the “Submit and Record Results” button at the bottom of the assignment is pressed the system (a) records all of the student responses, (b)immediately returns an evaluation page and, (c) sends the student and teacher an email with a synopsis of the results.

In the most common format the evaluation page contains:

1. the full statement of each problem for which a response was entered,
2. A statement as to whether the answer given is correct or incorrect. Note that for multi-part problems the answer to each component must be entered correctly for the system to consider the question to have been answered correctly),
3. the student’s answer,
4. the correct answer (whether the correct answer is display depends on the author of the assignment),
5. a comments window in which the student can enter a question or comment which will be forwarded to the teacher.

A web page is set up for the teacher in which all of the comments are organized. Through it the instructor can respond to individual comments by email since the system knows the student’s email



address.

There is no limit to the number of times a student can submit solutions to a particular assignment. It is quite common for students who have previously submitted homework to re-work and re-submit solutions while reviewing for examinations.

## Checking Homework Results

Students can review a synopsis of the assignment information recorded by the system at any time by clicking the “**Homework Scores**” bar on the main page. This will display the information for the currently selected course. Exactly the same information is available to the teacher of students registered for the course.

There are two types of information displayed:

1. A Homework Summary table in which the columns correspond to homework assignments and in which the rows indicate the number of the assignment, the number of problems attempted, the first date on which a problem in the assignment was attempted, and the last date on which a problem in the assignment was attempted.
2. A set of tables, one for each homework. In each table the columns correspond to the individual problems and there are two rows labeled “missed” and “right”. The entries of the table are html links whose labels are dates in the form “month/day”. **The dates are those of the first time an incorrect or correct answer was submitted to the problem.** Thus a link labeled “8/27” in the “Missed” row and “Q4” column of the table for problem set 10 means that the first time that the student submitted an incorrect answer to that problem was on August 27. A link labeled “8/30” in the “Right” row of the same column means that the first submission of a correct answer to that problem by the student occurred on August 30.

**Selecting a link in one of these tables results in the problem to which it corresponds being displayed in a separate browser window.**

**Note:** For assignments such as practice examinations in which there are many variants on an assignment the links do not correspond to the precise problem but rather to one near it according to the scheme by which the tests are generated from a pool of problems.

## **Changing Account Information**

**Changing Passwords:** You can change your password at any time at the “Change Password” bar. You should quickly change your password from the initial one to something more secure. If you lose your password then any teacher in whose class you are registered can create a new password for you. The teacher (nor anyone else) can recover the exact password that was lost.

**Changing Other Account Information:** The “modify account” bar on the main screen can be used to re-access the original registration screen and to change any of the information (e.g. email, school, student number, etc.) used to create the user’s account. The email is the most frequently changed of these as many people change their email addresses. When you change your email your new email automatically becomes your new login.