

Expectations for Participation and Preparation in Recitations

What do we do in recitations?

Recitation provides an opportunity for students to work together in a small group on challenging problems that are designed to build conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills. The emphasis is on learning to find, evaluate, and build confidence in answers. Recitations are not a repeat of the material covered in the text or lectures, or of the homework problems. In recitation, you will learn to:

- Apply your critical-thinking skills to the problem-solving methods you use
- Seek out, analyze, and provide feedback on input from other group members
- Form tests of the reasonableness of your answers

These are the process skills that can improve your performance on the exams and in your subsequent courses, when you are faced with new, often challenging, problems.

Why is it important to participate in, and be prepared for, recitations?

It is important that students participate in recitations so that they can learn from each other. We know that active involvement in learning increases what is remembered, how well it is assimilated, and how the learning is used in new situations. In making statements to peers about their own thoughts on a topic, students must articulate those thoughts and also submit them to (hopefully constructive) examination by others. It is important that students come prepared, with good familiarity with the material covered in the text, lectures, and on the homework, so that they can focus on the parts they don't understand and build connections between concepts. In listening to their peers, students hear many different ways of interpreting and applying class material, and thus are able to integrate many examples of how to use the information. Especially in a course that stresses application of material to solving problems, extensive participation in group discussions is an essential element of students' learning.

How is participation and preparation in recitations graded?

Participation in, and preparation for, each recitation session is graded on a scale from 0 (lowest) through 4 (highest), using the criteria stated below. The criteria focus on what you demonstrate and do not presume to guess at what you know but do not demonstrate. This is because what you offer to the group is what you and others learn from. The average level of participation is expected to satisfy the criteria for a "3". At the end of the semester, the grades from all recitations will be averaged to determine the overall grade for recitation.

Grade	Criteria
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absent
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present, not disruptive• Tries to respond when called on but does not offer much• Demonstrates very infrequent involvement in discussion
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates adequate preparation: knows basic facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret or analyze them• Offers straightforward information, without elaboration or very infrequently• Does not offer to contribute to discussion, but contributes to a moderate degree when called on• Demonstrates sporadic involvement
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates good preparation: knows facts well, has thought through implications of them• Offers interpretations and analysis of problems (more than just facts) to group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other student's points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions• Demonstrates consistent and ongoing involvement
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed problems exceptionally well, relating them to readings and other material (e.g., readings, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.)• Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of problems, e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the group further• Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to the cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of solving problems and helps group analyze which approaches are appropriate• Demonstrates ongoing very active involvement