HOW TO WRITE A PROBLEM SET

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College problem sets are rather different from high school homework; thus, you may not know (logistically) how to do it. The purpose of this handout is to clear up these problems so that we can concentrate on the math. Incidentally, these are also good tips for any kind of problem set or work.

- Write up solutions in 2 phases. Phase 1, do scratch work, be ugly, disorganized, etc. Phase 2, write up a clean copy. There should be *no* scratch work on your final copy.
- Homework must be stapled. If not, for the first offense you will lose 10 points, and for the n-th offense $10 * n$ points.

  There is no excuse for not stapling your sets; you can get staplers:
  - at CVS—for $3 it'll last you through Harvard. I know, I used mine to staple half of your sets last week;
  - on the third floor math department, outside room 325;
  - in the SciCen basement, by the DECs.
- None of those ugly scraps on the left edge of notebook paper—use nicer paper or tear them off (same penalty as no staples[1]).
- If you write in pen, cross out or white out mistakes; if you write in pencil, write darkly and erase errors completely.
- It is perfectly acceptable, and even encouraged (for environmental/entertainment value) to use old printouts/banner pages as problem set paper. It's pretty nice paper too.
- Your problem set will end up being stapled (see above), so if you use a legal pad, please flip pages over about the long axis so that we don't need to flip your set over.
- Lay out your problems so that they are easy to follow; no stream-of-consciousness proofs (for that, try the literature department).
- Leave margins and spaces so that we can write comments.
- Include name, "Math 23a," problem set # and your CA's name on the first sheet.

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[1] They accumulate with the same counter, so if you hand in unstapled notebook paper with ugly scraps, you will have two offenses and thus lose $10 + 20 = 30$ points for your first offense, etc.