

Math 172 – Conventions for Writing Numbers and Fractions

Decimals

Please write decimals with the leading zero:

- Instead of writing $-.15$, write -0.15 as your final answer.

Fractions

When writing a fraction in simplified form, your fraction

- should have a positive denominator:

Do not write $\frac{3}{-2}$. Instead, write either $-\frac{3}{2}$ (my preference) or $\frac{-3}{2}$.

- can be left in improper form:

You may leave your answer as $\frac{4}{3}$ instead of converting it to $1\frac{1}{3}$ if you wish.

- should not mix fractions and decimals:

Do not write $\frac{34}{0.9}$. Instead, multiply top and bottom by a suitable number to get rid of the decimal (in this case, by 10) to get a final answer of $\frac{340}{9}$.

- should be in lowest terms:

Instead of writing $\frac{5}{15}$, factor out a five from top and bottom to get an answer of $\frac{1}{3}$.

If there are variables in your fraction, use the same procedure to simplify $\frac{5xy^2}{10xy}$ to $\frac{y}{2}$.

- should not have fractions in either the numerator or denominator (fractions within fractions):

Instead of writing $\frac{\frac{2}{x}+3}{2}$, multiply top and bottom by 2 to get $\frac{4}{x+6}$. Similarly,

multiply top and bottom of $\frac{x}{1+\frac{2}{a}}$ by a to get $\frac{ax}{a+2}$.