

WIM Thoughts, Part II

1 Draft 2

Many drafts remain incomplete (in particular, there were quite a few papers that either did not include topic (3) in this draft or were especially lean on content), and still more papers had the feel of a very rough draft. Since your second draft was graded as if it were the final draft, grades were lower than expected. Don't despair, however, because your final grade will supplant your grade on this draft. **Generic Warning:** I've tried to make comments on everyone's draft, but don't think that these are the only things you need to correct on your final draft!

2 Grading guidelines

Below I outline the criteria for grading the final draft; if you'd like to see your grade improve for the final draft, make sure your paper has all the qualities listed below.

2.1 Writing

- Fluidity - Your paper should have a natural flow, so that a reader can progress from sentence to sentence or paragraph to paragraph without experiencing any discontinuities. This means paragraphs should collect together sentences that share a rough common idea, adjacent paragraphs should naturally flow into each other, and sections of the paper should be seamlessly sewn together.
- Organization - Your paper should present topics in a natural order so the reader feels (s)he's on a journey of discovery. One natural approach is to start your paper introducing basic ideas and then build to more complicated ones later in your paper. This will set you up for a nice "advanced topic" by the end (your section (3)).
- Style - Your paper should be an interesting read. It helps to use interesting sentence structures (for instance, it's probably a good idea to eschew imperatives in your paper since they don't make for a page-turner) and vary your choice of words.
- Grammatical Uprightness - Do I really need to mention this?
- Punctuality - There have been two preliminary drafts deadlines and the final deadline. Your grade will be affected by how carefully you met these deadlines.
- Clarity - It's quite tricky to write a math paper well, but a key ingredient is the clarity of your exposition. You must make sure your paper clearly explains the topics it presents, from Caesar shifts to your advanced cryptosystem of choice. Examples can help drive home difficult concepts, but you should always make an attempt to describe your processes in general.
- Formatting - Your literary work of art need not be a visual work of art, but it should be clear to the reader that you care about how your paper looks. Sloppiness is bad, bad, bad.

2.2 Math

- Content - There needs to be enough mathematical meat in your paper to satisfy requirements (1), (2), and (3) of this writing assignment. In particular, note that section (3) requires you cover a cryptosystem “in depth.” Do not simply repeat arguments you’ve made in previous homework assignments...add some new topics not included in class.
- Depth - You need to cover the mathematics in your paper in some depth. For instance, the assignment says you must explain why encryption and decryption in RSA works from a mathematical perspective. There are certainly mathematical stones you can leave unturned in your paper, but the reader should finish your paper feeling as though some mathematical content was truly explored and explained.
- Correctness - It’s dangerously easy to write mathematical lies in your paper, so don’t.

3 Getting help

We’ve reached the crunch point in the term, and this means that it will be harder to get extra feedback from me to improve your paper. If you’d like to talk about your paper with me, send me an email so we can set up a time to meet. I’ll read your draft while you’re there and we can talk about what’s still missing. Time is limited, however, as I’ll be out of town Friday afternoon to Monday evening (plus I have scholarly obligations myself).