FAQ for Structures Computer Problems

1. What are the "computer problems"?
   The "computer problems" are a set of homework problems covering the primary aspects of the course given to each student. Each student will have a unique set of problems to solve. Solutions to the problems are scored interactively over the internet. Each problem may be worked up to three times (with three different data sets) for credit. The best score of the three will be recorded.

2. So, if I miss question x in data set A, can I correct it by working that question only in data set B?
   No, each data set is scored separately. If you want to correct a mistake, you have to rework the whole problem with another set of data. BTW correcting mistakes by reworking the problem is strictly optional. It is a good way to learn the material and prepare for the test, but not required.

3. How do I find my problems?
   Go to the class web site, http://www.umich.edu/~arch324
   Click on the "Problem" tab and you will get a login screen.
   Login with your UM uniqname and UM-ID number (**not** your Kerberos password). Choose the problem you want to work and you will see information as well questions for the problem. Remember, complete problem descriptions are given in the pdf on the problem page.

4. What machines can access the site and where are they?
   www is (in theory) world wide. This is an open public site, so you should have no problem in accessing it form any machine with an internet connection.

5. How should I work the problems?
   Here you have a lot of latitude in finding the study method that best suits you. The goal is to learn the material. The computer problems are just a little check-up on how well you're doing that.

   Some will learn best in small study groups – that's fine. Others can read the chapters, and do it alone – no problem.

   You may want to start by having a look at the "free trial" using the generic Unique name `guest` (password = 123). Chances are that you may not be the first guest to login, so you may see a previous trial on this account.

   If you succeed with the guest data, you are ready for the real thing. Have a look at any one of your 3 data sets (1, 2 or 3) and work it out.

   When you are ready to check your answers, just type them into the box and hit submit. Here you can also choose your strategy – all at once or a few answers per session, in any order you like. In the end, you just need to be sure you've entered all of the answers for any one of the problems at least once. What you cannot do is 'mix-and-match' questions from different problem sets to get a final score. The score for a problem comes either from set '1' or set '2' or set '3', not combinations.

6. What if I make a typo?
Try reading what you type, double check before you hit submit. However, there is a safety feature for first time "typos". If you type in the wrong value, you will get a warning message that it is wrong (yellow box). You then have one more chance to enter the correct value. Once you submit the second time, it is final. Be careful about accuracy too.

7. How accurate do I have to be?
General practice (and also for these problems) expects ±2% accuracy. If you carry 3 significant digits you should be ok (so use 4 and be safe). An answer of 0.0001 would be 40% off if the correct answer were 0.000140. Use 3 *significant digits* not just 3 decimal places.

8. How do I know my score?
It will be tallied on the problem menu page.

9. How many chances do I get?
You get three chances to work the problem with three different data sets (1, 2, or 3). The best score of the three will be the score recorded.

10. Can I have another set or data if I mess up all 3?
Read the answer to question 9. Structures is fun, but we have to draw the line somewhere.

11. When are problems due?
The current due date is listed on the problem menu page. Due dates extend to the utter end of the day, viz. 11:59:59 p.m. After that it is the next day, and you might as well go to bed.

12. What if I am late?
Late problems are penalized at a rate of -5% per day up to a maximum penalty of -35%. It's never too late to try to catch up - better late than not at all.

13. What if I suspect an error in the program?
What you read on the screen was typed in for the most part by human hands. So there may be an occasional glitch. If you find such a rare jewel send an email to pvbuelow@umich.edu. Also if you just find the wording confusing or can suggest any other improvement, just let me know.

14. How much do the problems count toward my grade?
The computer problems count approximately the same as the 3 tests together. Each question is weighted the same (not each problem), and counts 5 pts.

15. What would happen to me if I were to back-page really fast after entering a wrong answer and fix it?
I wouldn't try that if I were you!