

As we start using software to help with homework computations, there are a number of bad methods to avoid, and good ones to practice. Try to keep in mind that some person is trying to make sense of your work. Present the work in a clear, well-documented, easy to follow format. A number of formats are acceptable.

One good method is to collect the questions and answers (numbers, interpretations) at the front of your homework document in an 'executive summary'. Next should come a description of the method. This could include well-documented software. Usually, computer generated output should come last, and be used sparingly. Nobody is impressed by an inch of computer generated numbers, or graphs that are not part of the solution.

It is also possible to develop a clear presentation without the 'executive summary'. Clearly label the problem, and its parts. Write at least a summary of the question. When you get an answer, clearly label the answer, and describe what you just calculated in words. Something like "thus we see that the sensitivity of the blue whale population to the first intrinsic growth rate is 3.5" makes it much easier to follow your work. If you print a number, do it in decimal form. Numbers in the form $\frac{13576542}{6789876}$ are not very useful. Once again, large volumes of computer printout are usually irrelevant; if you do include them, put them at the end.

Finally, here is a list of do's and don'ts.

1. Do not print pages of numbers.
2. Do not print computer error messages.
3. Use m-files rather than interactive programming.
4. Make sure solutions are explained and labelled. This goes for both graphs and numbers.
5. Ask yourself if you will understand what you did a month from now based on your written work.