

# Getting Help

CS 272 Software Development

# Getting Programming Help

- Getting help is a **skillset**
  - It isn't something you know (i.e. memorization), it is something you do (i.e. **requires practice**)
- Important both for school and future career
  - Problem solving sometimes requires a **different perspective** than the one you have (unavoidable)



# Getting Programming Help

- Not as simple as just **asking for help**
  - Helps to ask the right type of questions
  - Helps to have put in effort (**1 hour rule**)
- Not as simple as just **receiving help**
  - Helps to get the right type of answers
  - Providing help is another skillset (often untrained)



# Why Ask Questions?

- Goal is not to ask for (or provide) "the solution"
  - *Avoid*: What is the answer for [x]?
  - *Better*: **How** do I find the answer for [x]?
  - *Better*: **How** do I get started solving [x]?
  - *Prefer*: What should I **try next** to solve [x]?



# Why Ask Questions?

- Goal is to **get unstuck** and solve the problem yourself
  - *Avoid*: No growth to your understanding or skillset
  - *Prefer*: Growing your understanding and skillset
- Goal is still to **do the work** of problem solving
  - *Avoid*: Not being able to contribute to "the work"
  - *Prefer*: Helping each other do "the work"



# How to Get Started (with Tests)

- **RT(F)M\*** as a starting point
  - *Learning to read documentation is another skill!*
- Focus on a **single method** or subset of functionality
- Focus on a **single test** or group of method/subset
- Output the **parameters** passed in by the test(s)
- Look at what was **expected** for those parameters
- Build code up **iteratively** and test as you go

*\*RT(F)M: Read the (...) manual*



# How to Get Help (with Tests)

- Work on a problem for 30 minutes to 1 hour
- **If stuck on a problem for over an hour, ask for help!**
  - *Worst Case:* You get unstuck before we can help (yay!)
  - *Best Case:* We help you get unstuck and you can keep making progress (also yay!)
- Focus on the next step not the final solution



# How to Get Help (with Tests)

- Post a LINK to your code on Github – *no screenshots*
- Tell us which tests your code is passing
- Tell us the FIRST TEST your code is not passing (*this should be your focus*)
- Give us the test output (can copy/paste from Eclipse)
- Tell us what you have tried, so we don't suggest something you have already done





# Keep in Mind...

- The problems we tackle should be **solved iteratively**, regardless of whether you are stuck
- You **need practice** with both problem solving and getting help with that process
  - *OK*: You don't know how to ask the right questions
  - *NOT OK*: Not asking for help if you are stuck!



# Keep in Mind...

- You need **you** to write a search engine
  - You don't need **the solution** to this problem
  - You need **the practice** solving complex problems
- Don't be afraid to **use the force** (i.e. take a break?)



# Questions?

