The main reason to do homework is to learn statistics, not to get a “grade.” Therefore it is important that you look at the homework that is returned. If we are doing this right, you should learn from doing the problem but you should also learn from the feedback you receive about your work. A senior mathematics major with substantial grading experience (as well as classroom-teaching experience) will read you homework. He is looking for both statistical correctness and your ability to appropriately communicate statistical knowledge. To that end, he will write two letters next to each problem — the first of these letters has to do with statistical correctness and the second with communication. The five possible letters are C, S, D, M, X. These letters come from the scheme used to grade the AP Statistics free-response questions and are described in a document posted on the course web page.

You will find that the grader is extremely “hard” in the sense that it will be quite difficult to convince the grader that you should receive a C, especially for communication. This is by design — you are still learning what effective statistical communication entails and it would be surprising if you were “complete” from the start. So you should treat an S as a very good result but also should read the grader’s comments so that you can see how to improve.

Notice that the grading scheme has some subjectivity in it and also that a student grader is not likely to grade as consistently or correctly as an experienced instructor. You should not be needlessly concerned about these kinds of variations however. This grading scheme ensures that the grader will be reasonable consistent from student to student (e.g., though your grade of S rather than C on one aspect of a problem might seem unduly harsh, other students will also receive S for similar work). At the end of the semester, my conversion of homework scores to letter grades will be extremely generous to take into account such things. I can virtually guarantee that if you try all the homework (and turn it in, of course) you will receive a good homework grade. Also you should note that although some homework assignments will have more problems than others, all homework assignments are of equal value.