How can I submit handwritten (or paper-based) work?

Your instructor might encourage you to submit handwritten (or other paper-based) work. But how do you get it from your desk to the instructor? Usually, you will submit a digital version of your work via an online tool (like Quercus' Quiz or Assignment tool, or perhaps Crowdmark). The trick is to get that paper version into a digital version, legibly, to ensure that you receive full credit for your work.

This guide documents some recommendations, but your instructor might have specific requirements for your submission. You should double-check in each of your courses, for each of your assignments, to confirm that you are **submitting according to that assessment's specific guidelines**.

Prefer a video? Watch "How to submit online assessments" by Prof. Parsch

Video credit: Fabian Parsch
*Music credit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcNQCVyvQe0*

How to convert your paper-based work to a digital submission

1. Test early to ensure that your submission is clear and legible (use large size printing and a solid stroke).
2. Annotate the top area of your paper with detailed submission information (e.g. Name, question number, course code, etc.)
3. Take a clear, well framed, high quality photo (or use a scanner, if available).
4. Copy and paste your images into one uploadable document (PDF, if available).
5. Name the file using the required naming convention.
6. Save a local copy of everything that you upload (for your own records).
7. Confirm submission (and consider screenshot-ing this timestamp/confirmation for your own records).

1. Test early to ensure that your submission is clear and legible.

Example: Acceptable Writing Utensil Strokes
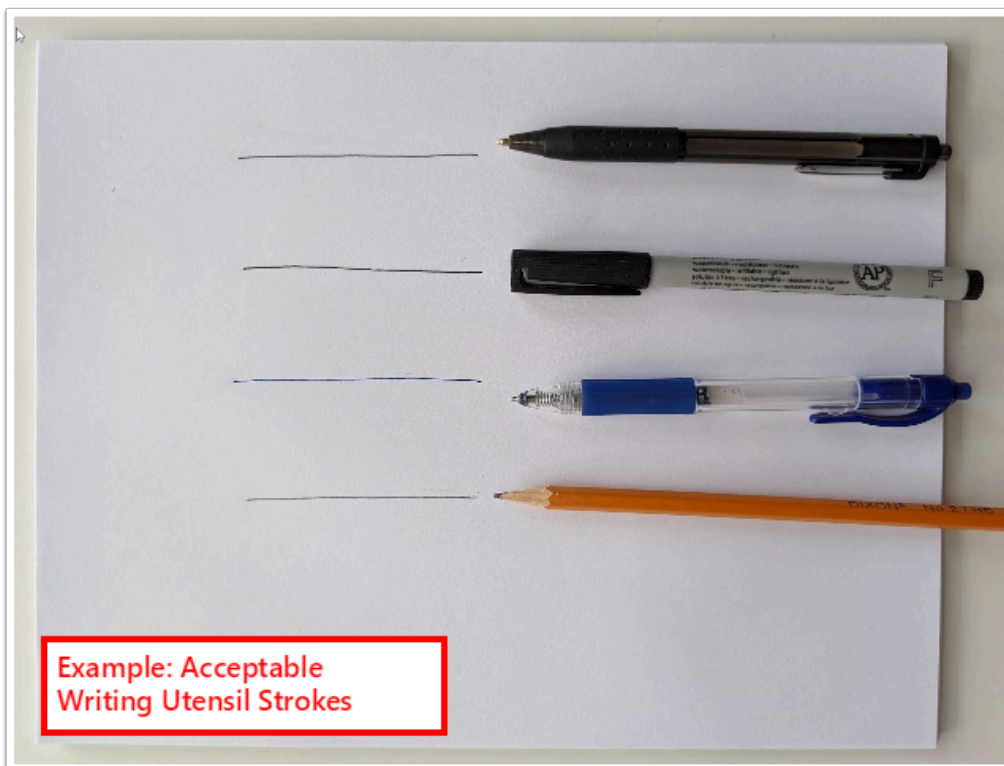
1. **Don't assume; test!** Before you write your assessment, test out the pen/pencil that you are planning on using. When you take a photo, is the ink/lead clear? Try to use large size printing and a solid stroke.
2. **Write slightly bigger than normal**. While this might feel awkward, a little extra size will help the transfer to the digital format.
3. **Erase thoroughly**. If you are using a pencil, make sure you're erasing as much as possible. The "muddiness" of the erased area is emphasized when the photo is taken.

2. Annotate the top area of your paper with detailed submission information (e.g. name, question number, course code, etc.)
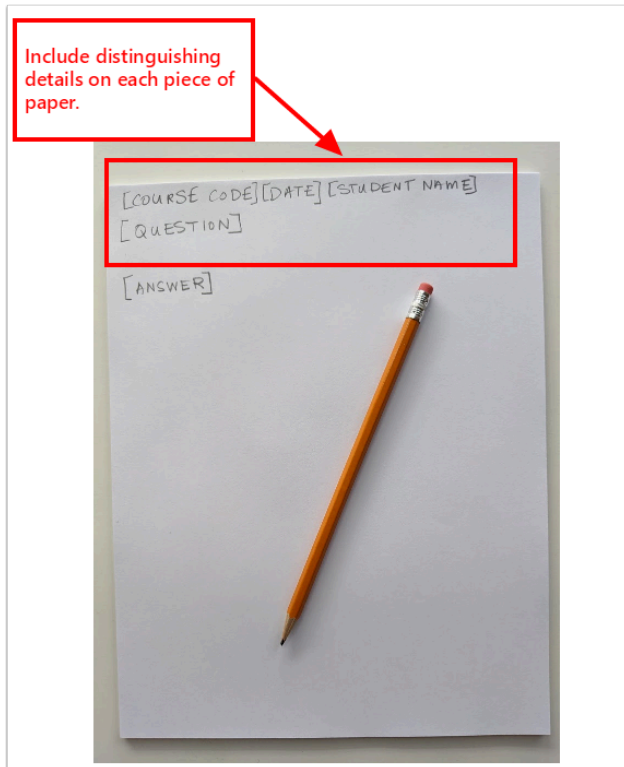
1. **Check Submission Guidelines**. Your instructor will likely have specified exactly what should appear in this "header" area. If not, you can include your name/student number. The balance here is that you don't want to spend all your time on this section, but you want it to be easily identifiable as your work.
2. **Leave some space.** Give some padding between the administrative information and the answer submission.

3. Take a clear, well-framed, high quality photo (or use a flatbed scanner or scanner app, if available).

Photo of Solution (Bad)

- no header information
- no question details
- small writing
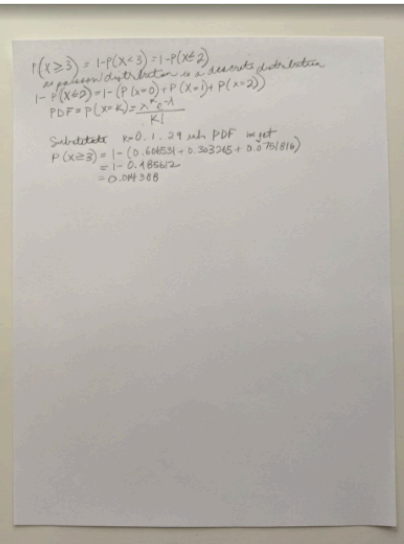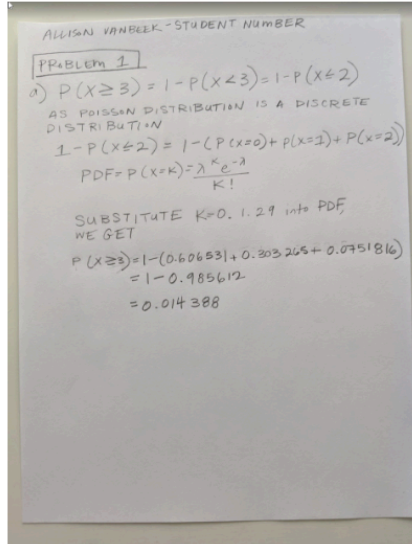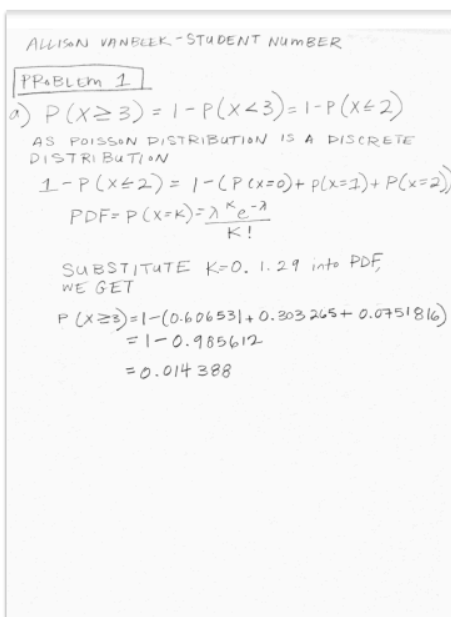- cursive writing, not printing

Photo of Solution (Better)

- includes header information
- includes question (with emphasis)
- larger writing
- printing, not cursive

Example: Google Drive Scan Option

Benefits to scanning:
1. Increased contrast
2. No framing around the photo

Negatives to scanning:
1. Extra step
2. Extra testing (requires an app that works with your set up)

1. **Take photos on a flat, well lit, clean surface.** Remove other items from the frame.

2. **The better the lighting, the better the photo**. Using natural light is great, but so is a focused light source that reduces shadow over the page.
3. **Take up as much of the frame with the paper as possibl**e.
4. If using a smart phone to take photos, you can use the document scanning option available via OneDrive (for [MacOS](#) and for [Android](#)). You can review **photo scanning apps**. Popular options are to use [Google Drive to scan documents](#) into PDFs or [how to scan documents using your iPhone or iPad using the Notes app](#). (As noted earlier, if you plan to use one of these apps, test early and use at your own discretion).

> 💡 **Did you know you can digitally "scan" documents?** Take it one step farther than a picture and use OneDrive to scan any paper documents you are submitting. See **Scan a whiteboard, document, business card, or photo in OneDrive for [Android](#)** or **for [iOS](#)**.

4. Copy and paste your images into one uploadable document (print to PDF, if available).

Chances are that you are going to have more than one piece of photo (and thus, more than one photo). If you are submitting one file, you'll want to combine these photos into one, uploadable file (usually a PDF). A simple workflow to do this is to:

1. **Copy and paste your photos into a document** (e.g. Word, Powerpoint, Open Office, Keynote, etc.) that allows you to export/print to PDF.
2. **Confirm that your instructor has not specified any guidelines for this document**. They might ask you to type in the question. Teaching teams will often divide questions by marker, so they likely will try to keep submissions one question per page (as an example).

5. Name the file using the required naming convention.

1. **Name this file with the file-naming convention specified by your instructor**. (If none, use your family name and student number, at minimum.)

6. Save a local copy of everything that you upload (for your own records).

1. Save both the "pieces" (components, e.g. photos) of your final document as well as the final document (as a whole). Should there be a reason that you need to re-submit, you can easily refer to the files.

7. Confirm submission and consider screenshot-ing this timestamp/confirmation (for your own records).

1. **Ensure your own peace of mind**. When you submit, the tool should give you a confirmation of a submission. You might want to save this (if it is say, an email) or take a screenshot (and save it locally). You will likely not have to use it, but it is nice to have for reference.

> 💡 **Do you have tips to make this guide better?** Please email them to fase.edtech@utoronto.ca and we'd be happy to add them in!