

Graphing Calculator for MATH 115

This course requires students to have a graphing calculator. You may use any type of graphing calculator that you wish (I discuss one exception in the last paragraph), but I will teach using a TI-83/84 graphing calculator. These are superb calculators, and in this country they are the most commonly used models of graphing calculator. Actually, you are already likely to own one.

As I explain in the syllabus, you are required to purchase the textbook and the online homework companion called WebAssign (concerning which I will explain in class). Besides those items, the graphing calculator is the only equipment that you will need for the course, and in fact the only calculator that you will probably need for any class that you take or for any practical, real-world application.

If you do not already have a graphing calculator, I highly recommend that you acquire a TI-83/84, and I will now provide detailed advice on exactly which model you should get.

There are four levels of the TI-83/84 graphing calculator, which I enumerate here:

- TI-83 Plus
- TI-83 Plus Silver Edition
- TI-84 Plus
- TI-84 Plus Silver Edition

The least expensive is the TI-83 Plus. With this excellent calculator, you will be able to do all the calculator work for this course.

A more expensive calculator is the TI-83 Plus Silver Edition. It does everything that the TI-83 Plus does, and more quickly. The Silver Edition also includes a number of additional built-in programs, but we will not be using any of them in this course.

Several years ago, Texas Instruments also introduced a TI-84 Plus and a TI-84 Plus Silver Edition. The TI-84 Plus is a souped-up version of the TI-83 Plus, and the TI-84 Plus Silver Edition is an enhanced version of the TI-83 Plus Silver Edition.

If you do not already have one of these calculators, and if you are willing to spend more money, then I recommend that you purchase the TI-84 Plus. Like the TI-84 Plus Silver Edition, it has a somewhat brighter and clearer display than do the TI-83 models. The TI-84 Plus has fewer additional built-in programs than the TI-84 Plus Silver Edition does. It does have many such programs, however, and in any event we will not be using any of them in this course. Also, the TI-84 Plus costs a little bit less than does the TI-84 Plus Silver Edition. But it does cost more than the TI-83 models.

To be clear, the least expensive model is the TI-83 Plus. It is a fine calculator, and you will be able to do all the work for the course with this model. But if you do need to purchase a graphing calculator, and if you are willing to spend more money, then I recommend the TI-84 Plus.

Calculators not allowed: I am going to teach using the TI-83/84, but I will allow any graphing calculator provided that it is not a CAS (which stands for computer algebra system) calculator. A CAS calculator can manipulate algebraic variables, so using such a calculator defeats the purpose of teaching algebra and pre-calculus and gives an unfair advantage to students who do not have such a calculator. Common examples of CAS calculators are the TI-89, TI-89 Titanium Edition, and TI-Nspire CAS (the regular TI-Nspire is fine). If you have any questions at all regarding your calculator, please ask me.