

# Computer Principles for Programmers FAQ

## Can someone very gently explain everything to me?

New beginnings are always a challenge until we have the experience to deal with them. This is true for new students and sometimes for old professors who may be as surprised as you regarding anything that happens in the first week.

## Requests for help

**Mistakes are okay. Excuses are not.**

**For student account or technical issues** with college systems, contact the [The Service Hub](#), or email ServiceDesk@SenecaPolytechnic.ca or telephone (416) 764-9900.

**For academic issues**, your first point of contact is your [Student Adviser](#).

**For questions about the course**, contact your professor or post a message in your course's MS Team. Please read on if you want anyone in ICT to take you seriously.

NEVER send a photo or screen shot of **text** on a screen. e.g. source code  
[Select, copy, and paste the text](#) and describe a [test case](#).

NEVER send a photo of an **image** on a screen.  
[Take a screen shot](#) and describe a [test case](#).

Student: "I am really confused so please help me out."

Professor: "I am really confused about what help you need."

Student: "It doesn't work."

Professor: "Sorry to hear that. It works for me."

First, make notes while you reread the specifications / instructions – nobody can keep lots of new information in their heads at first. Professional programmers reread the specs again and again – they cannot remember everything either – then they make notes to take action.

Tell your professor *what* you are confused about. If it's *everything* and your professor tells you everything all over again, that will make it worse.

When things go wrong, create a repeatable [test case](#): clearly detail the problem, quoting the text / source code, and the steps you took leading up to problem. Anyone trying to help needs to see what you see and understand how you got there. Guessing wastes your time and theirs.

**Check your Seneca email frequently.** When sending email:

- Use only your @mySeneca.ca email account when sending to other @mySeneca.ca and to @SenecaPolytechnic.ca addresses; the college spam filter can be very aggressive with email from other domains.
- Include your full ABC123**XAA** course code and student number in messages to your student advisor, program coordinator, and professors. It really helps. Like you, we have more than one class. But all our classes may have the same course code; we don't know where to find you without the last three letters.

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See Seneca's [Technical Requirements for Online Learning](#)

Watch some short introductions to using [Blackboard Learn Ultra](#), our learning management system which hosts your courses and online learning materials.

- **CAUTION:** Blackboard's "Activity Stream" seems like a good thing to track important things like tests and assignment due dates. It *mostly* works. There are documented cases where it has not – at least one student has failed the course because they relied on the Activity Stream. Use it ONLY as a double-check of your own tasks list. If you miss a quiz, test, or deadline because you were relying on the Activity Stream to organize your life and it missed something, sue Blackboard. It is neither an excuse nor a reason that your professor will accept. Blackboard's documentation does not tell professors how to ensure critical items appear in the Activity Stream. Effectively, no one knows how it works. *We do know it does not work all the time for everyone.*
- Make notes. Create your own Tasks list and/or use your smartphone's calendar for classes, tests, quizzes, and assignment due dates.

## Course Resources:

- At <https://cpr101.ca> are Computer Principles for Programmers (CP4P) course content files for each week.
- Information critical to your success may arrive via email, Learn@Seneca announcements, or Teams.
  - Yes, there are multiple channels.
  - but not through WhatsApp, Messenger, Messages, iMessage, Telegram, Signal, Discord, Snapchat, Line, WeChat, Viber, Voxer, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn, or ~~Twitter~~ X (God Forbid).
- Yes, there is a lot of reading. ICT is a endeavour of many details.

## Activities:

- Submit weekly activity document, under "Course Resources and assignment submission". The upload link is the Week's topic. See submit details there.
- Only the -Activity-Answers.docx needs to be uploaded.

## Quizzes:

- Each week's Quiz questions are based on what you see in the previous week's PowerPoint slides. (not the notes under the slides)
- Quizzes may be taken online on Blackboard or on paper. Your professor will advise.

## Microsoft Office 365 > Teams

- Questions and comments about course content and weekly activities go in the class's General area.
- Questions of a personal nature, e.g. your marks, go in Chat.

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"There is a Visual Studio version for Mac. I can try to install it to my Macbook ..."

Do. Not. Do. That. "Visual Studio for Mac" does not support C / C++ languages. It is for programming in the Apple ecosystem and is specific to a few select programming courses at Seneca.

"Instead of Visual Studio, can I use ...*something else*...?"

We not only show how to code in a programming language, we demonstrate the practice of programming.

Our teaching and learning resources use Visual Studio IDE (e.g. for code-completion, code formatting, debugging, assignment frameworks) to help you be a programmer, not just a coder. More professional programmers use VS than any other IDE; our Program Advisory Committee members – your future employers – have asked that you know this; unlike many pro tools, VS works for students, too.

Yes, it is possible to use something other than Visual Studio (VS) to complete your C programming course. **Visual Studio Code** is the best alternative being cross-platform for macOS, Linux, and Windows; it has become a close second to Visual Studio IDE. However, expect to be somewhat on your own with respect to configuration, debugging steps, and some aspects of support from your professor. Be prepared to translate anything referring to Visual Studio into your own tool's equivalents. Our courses may provide a Visual Studio project for an assignment; you will have to extract the code. Experienced programmers can probably manage this easily, but for most people it will all take extra time...

"Why is this a PDF document instead of HTML or via social media?"

Because professors don't have staff. If they had staff, this FAQ would be 2.1. We also don't snapchat, instabook, tictweet, toktube, or facechat. Sorry. We just don't have the cycles, nor does the college have perfect IT systems that work for every conceivable – and inconceivable – use case, nor to everyone's preferred application or interface or form factor or platform. Tuition would be utterly unaffordable if we did. After you graduate and work in industry, they won't care what *you* like to use, they only care about what *they* like to use.