

Helping Students Navigate Their Way Through Technology in the Intro Stat Class

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I am exhibiting how to guides that we have written for the use of students in our intro stat courses. We have created various guides for the topics covered in an intro stat course. The technology sources that we focused on are Excel, Minitab, and TI calculators.

In the introductory statistics course, we usually expect our students to be able to implement some software for data analysis. There are several options as to how to approach this. We can leave it up to the individual student to use whatever they feel comfortable with. The responsibility can be given to TA's (if you have them) to teach the students some useful technology skills. Alternatively, we, as the instructor, can spend class time teaching computing skills.

If we leave it up to each student to figure out some technology to use, then it is likely that students will simply skip those problems or ask for help learning to use a technology that they think they should know. The situation quickly occurs in which we spend a great deal of time with students outside of class helping them learn to utilize technology instead of being able to focus on material they are struggling with. Many students prefer to ask questions via email which proves to be time consuming and usually not very helpful for the student.

Our goal is to provide some materials to the student that are easily understood and implemented so as to allow the student to choose the technology they feel is the best for them. This will hopefully allow them to learn one of the technology methods well enough that they feel comfortable enough to use it for any problem they encounter in our class. Ideally, they will learn enough about the technology of their choice that they can use it in other classes and in their jobs in the future.

We have developed what we call How To guides that are self explanatory materials from which the student can learn to use Excel, Minitab, or a TI calculator. Our goal is to provide the students access to these materials, either on a webpage or in a packet, so they can teach themselves how to use technology to solve problems they encounter. This will enable us and our TA's to focus on teaching material in the classroom without penalizing the students who are unfamiliar with technology.

We hope that students will find these How To guides helpful and informative. They are intended to be stand only materials so that a student can pick up the How To guide and teach themselves what they need to know. So far, this has drastically reduced the number of questions that the students have about how to implement technology into their problem solving. This allows us to spend more time with our students helping them understand the material instead of having to focus on getting a problem completed for a homework assignment using technology.