CS15 TA Hours Policy Fall 2019

Introduction

TA office hours for CS15 will be held in a TA lab (CIT 271), also known as the "Fishbowl", every day of the week. A calendar of our 180+ TA hours can be found here.

CS15 uses a wait-line program that runs in Google Sheets. To sign up for hours, sign up on any personal device at [this link](#), or go the Fishbowl and add your name to the queue on the designated sign-up computer (the closest one to the door). A TA will call your name/login outside the Fishbowl when it is your turn. You can check your position in the queue on the sheet at any time.

If you feel that any policy is unfair to your situation, reach out to the HTAs at cs0150headtas@lists.brown.edu.

Policies

Following is an outline of the TA Hours policy. Included after each policy is a brief rationale for why that policy has been implemented.

1. If you hit a bug, you should have put *significant effort* into fixing it on your own before seeing a TA. You should be able to show relevant evidence - including design, pseudocode, printlines, or debugger use. **TAs will turn away students who cannot provide evidence of attempting to solve their problem on their own.**
   a. <u>Rationale</u>: A vital part of creating a foundation of knowledge in computer science is understanding how to locate bugs in your code and find solutions. Although it may be frustrating at times, devoting the time to debug your own code is essential to success in CS15. TAs are available as a resource only when it is evident that you have truly attempted solving the issue.
2. The signup system will begin accepting sign-ups **10 minutes before the first set of hours**, and everyone who signs up by the time hours start will be **randomized**. For instance, if hours start at 4:00, sign-ups will open at 3:50 and will be randomized once at 4:00.

    a. <u>Rationale</u>: Many students are in class, at work, or at extracurricular activities when the sign-up sheet goes live. We believe no student should have a disadvantage in being seen at TA hours due to outside commitments; hence, the randomization levels the field so it is fair for all. **However, if you are not seen for multiple days due to unlucky randomization, you should reach out to the HTAs.**

3. The signup system has a field for "Question," which must be specific. Rather than "*LiteBrite Question*", say "*I can get my peg to appear but cannot get them to change color when another color is selected.*"
    a. <u>Rationale</u>: Providing a thought-out question helps the TA understand how to best help you and also demonstrates that you've thoroughly contemplated how to solve your bug before resorting to TA hours.

4. TAs can only help with **one question/concept/bug per visit.**
    a. <u>Rationale</u>: We feel a responsibility to give equal support to all students, which means that if we give extra support to one student, we must provide provide the same for all students, significantly slowing down TA hours. A student cannot expect to be the special case who receives extra help.

5. Each TA hours visit is capped at **15 minutes**.
    a. <u>Rationale</u>: We enforce the hours time limit so that all students that expect to be seen during hours (according to their spot in line) will still meet with a TA. If a bug is unusually difficult to solve and has not been solved in the 15 minute window, there is a greater chance you will reach a solution if you redirect your issue to Piazza; if the bug continues to persist, contact the HTAs.

6. The signup system allows you to sign up **once per hour** (even if there is no line).
    a. See rationale for policies 1 and 4.

7. Students are not allowed to work individually in the Fishbowl. If you are not currently being helped by a TA, please wait outside the room.
    a. <u>Rationale</u>: The fishbowl has a maximum occupancy limit according to fire code, which we cannot exceed. Furthermore, students unaccompanied by a TA can be a distraction to other students and TAs working in the fishbowl. Feel free to continue working outside the fishbowl around the balcony, or anywhere in the CIT (Sunlab, Moonlab, etc.)!

8. If your name is called and you are not present, you will be marked "Missing" on the spreadsheet. When you do arrive, **wait for a TA to come out of the Fishbowl and tell them that you arrived so they can update your status on the sheet**. TAs will continue to call your name for **15 minutes**, and if you still do not appear, **you will lose your spot in line and be deleted from the**

spreadsheet. There are consequences for repeatedly not showing up for hours you sign up for - remove yourself from the queue to avoid this.

    a. <u>Rationale</u>: We have a commitment to keep the TA hours line running, and we don't want students signing up before they have an issue, assuming they'll come to hours whenever they hit a roadblock. The CIT can be reached from anywhere on campus in less than 15 minutes, so we expect that you're monitoring your status in the sheet and will make your way to the CIT when your turn is soon.

9. TA hours will end at the posted time regardless of the length of the queue left **(TAs are students too, with their own lives)**. TA hours lines grow exponentially longer as the project goes on, so it's a bad idea to expect to get help the last 30 minutes of TA hours before a deadline.

    a. <u>Rationale</u>: TAs are students (people, even!), who also have busy schedules and coursework. **We all put in a lot of time to make sure this course runs smoothly, and while we love doing it, we need to care for our own mental and physical health, as well as work on our own homework too.**

10. Do not expect to receive more than your "fair share" of TA hours, especially for debugging questions. We want you to get the help you need, which is why we hold more hours than *any other course at Brown*, but keep in mind that struggling through hard bugs on your own is the fastest route to becoming an expert debugger.

    a. See all above rationales.