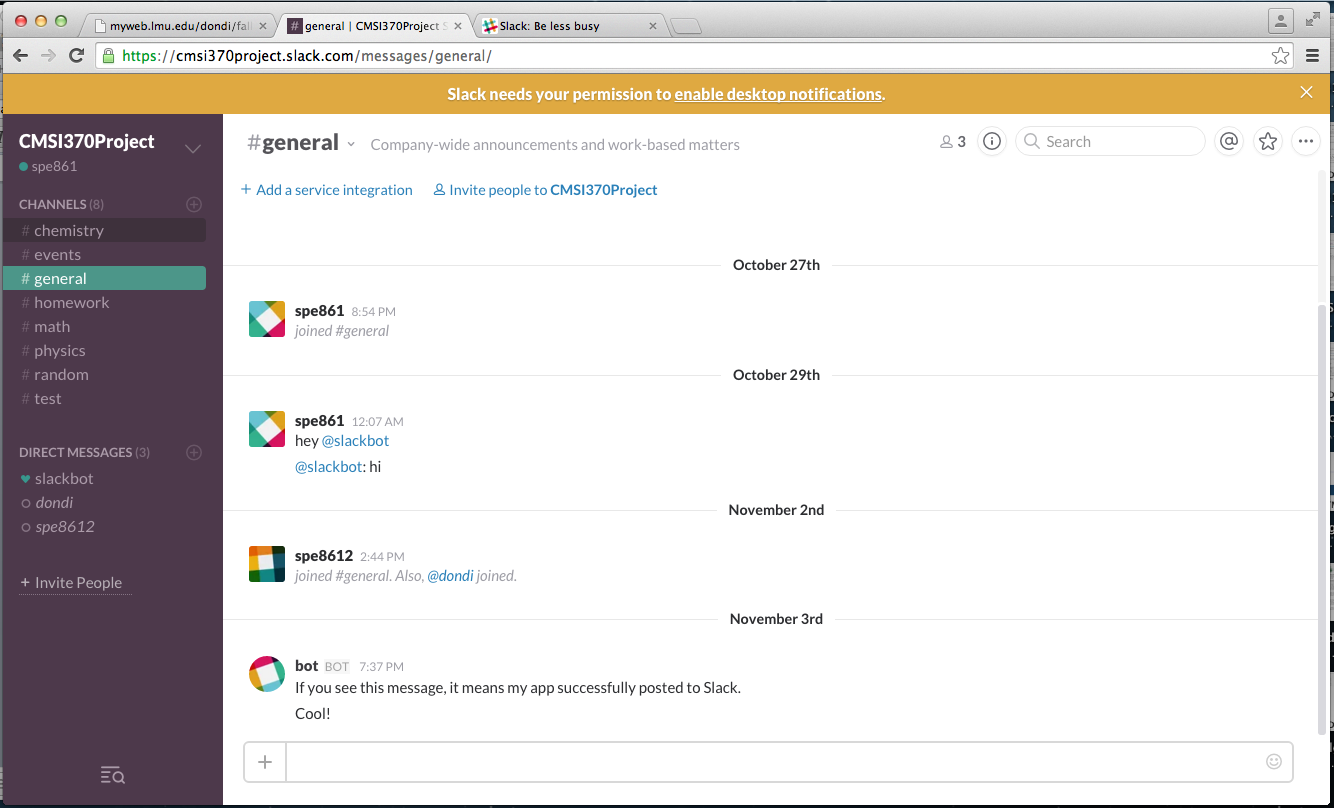
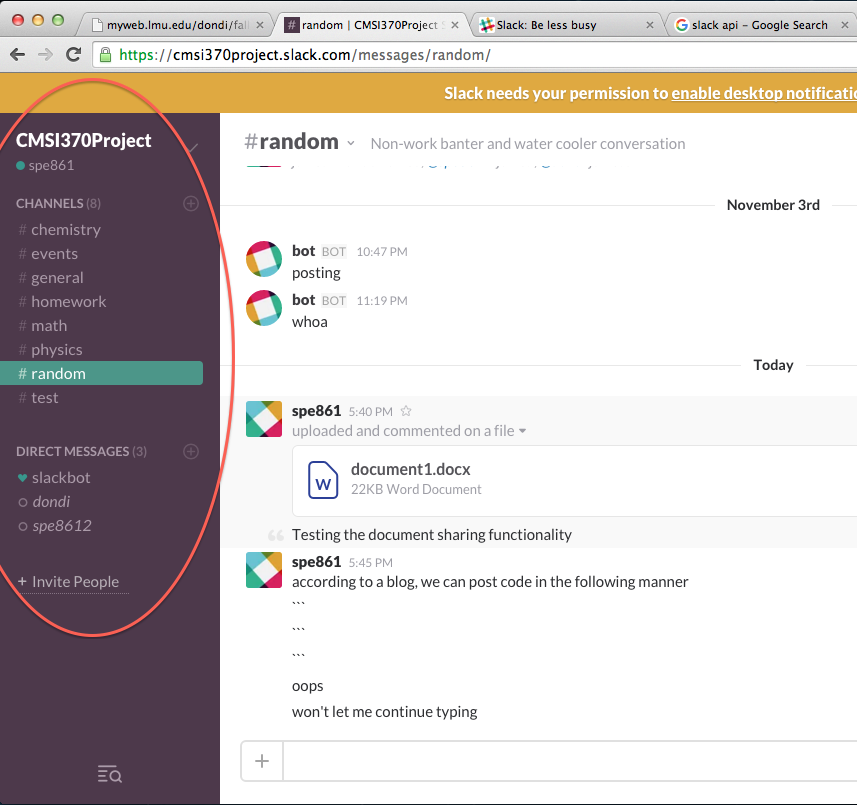
Slack Dream-Design

1. The Slack API, offered by the company Slack as an instant messaging interface (above) seems as though it performs the same functionality as email and other chat services with messaging, sharing documents, and posting videos, and that it might have been formed purely for interface design reasons. However, this system is particularly unique from Twitter, iMessaging, Gmail, and so on, in that it stems from the company’s goal to reduce overall company-wide emails.

It accomplishes this by how it organizes chat-rooms. It first organizes company-wide communication into “teams,” where each team can then have multiple channels based on a given topic.

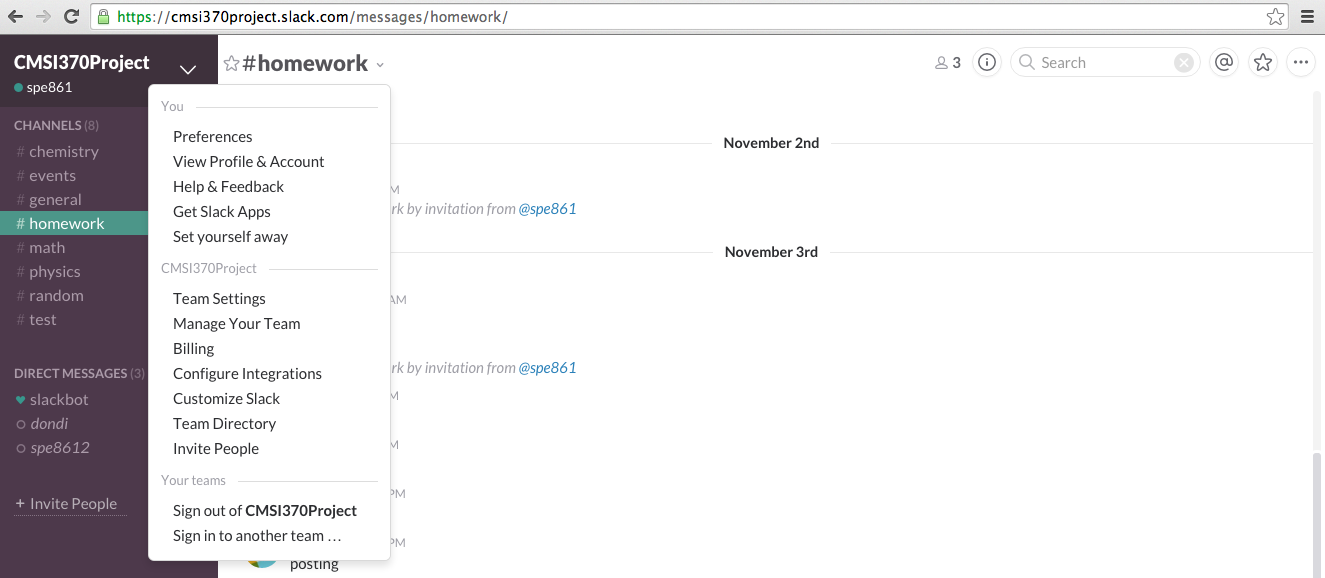




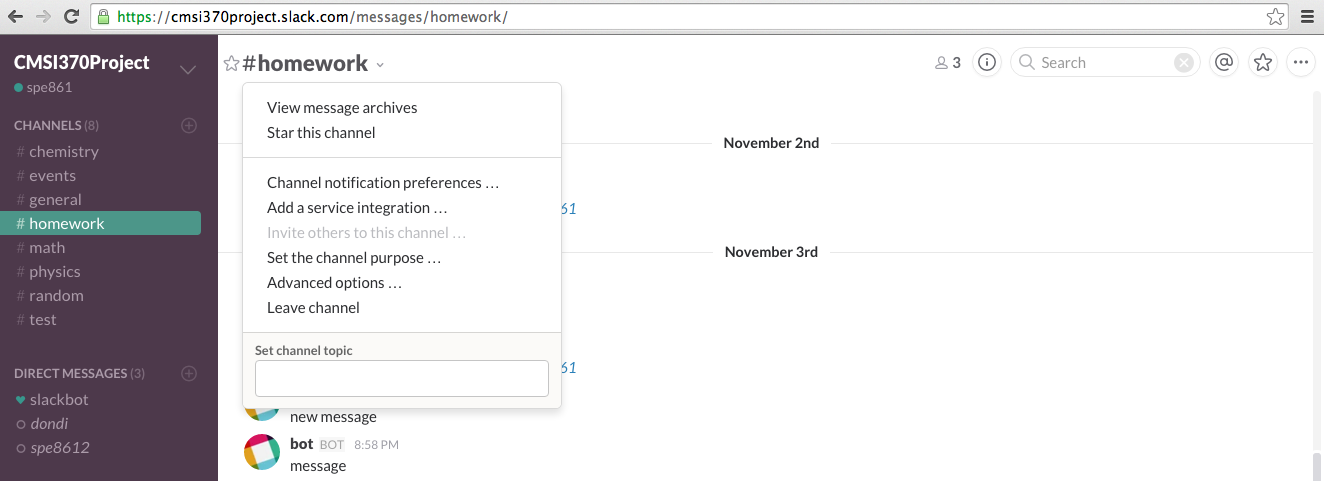
Channels can be public and include everyone who is on the team. There can be direct channels with another user, or there can be private groups with invite only access.

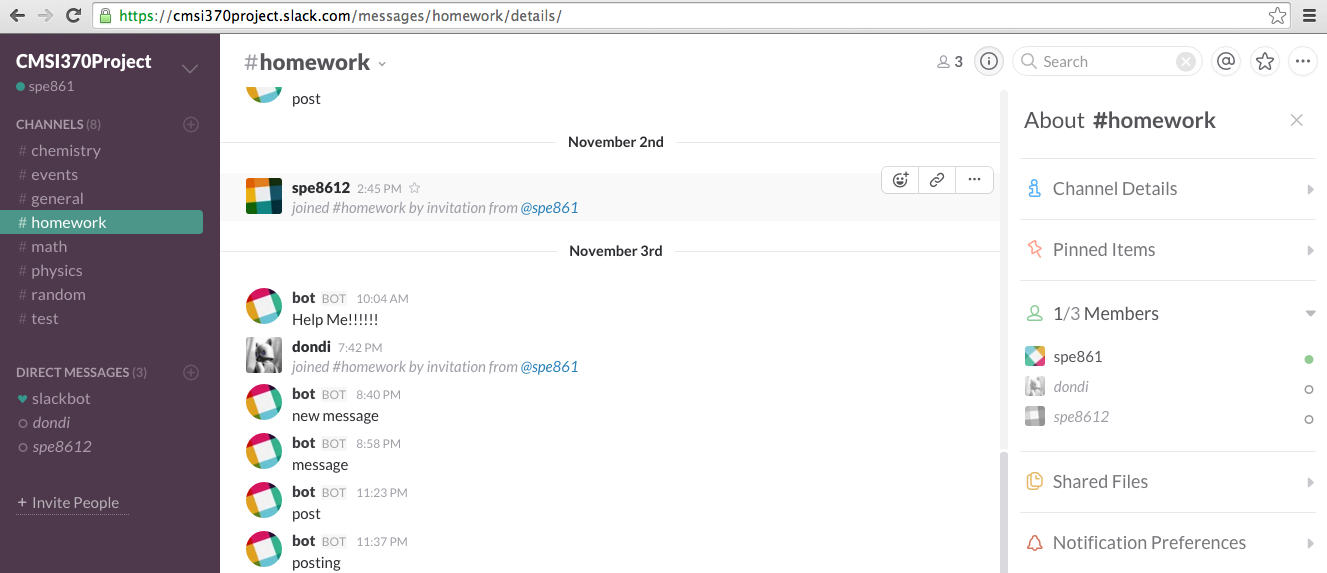
Slack allows a company, which previously had lines of communication through many different applications on several different types of devices, to centralize communication through a single application that has all of the affordances of the other services combined. This is in part accomplished by how Slack has a mobile app, and it is also accomplished by how it can integrate with other widely used services such as Google Drive, Dropbox, Box, Github, and many more “to pull information and activity from outside tools into Slack in a way that is timely, relevant, and searchable” (Slack.com) Users can easily see what is being discussed in public channels to be aware of what is happening in other parts of the company, which of course is a huge bonus for transparency. At the same time, users can still have private conversations just as a simple email stream would.

There are, of course, aspects of the interface that can be improved. One example is that users may be confused as to where certain settings are. They seem to be scattered throughout different menus at the top of the page, as opposed to being centralized in a single menu, or at most 2, indicated by a gear icon.



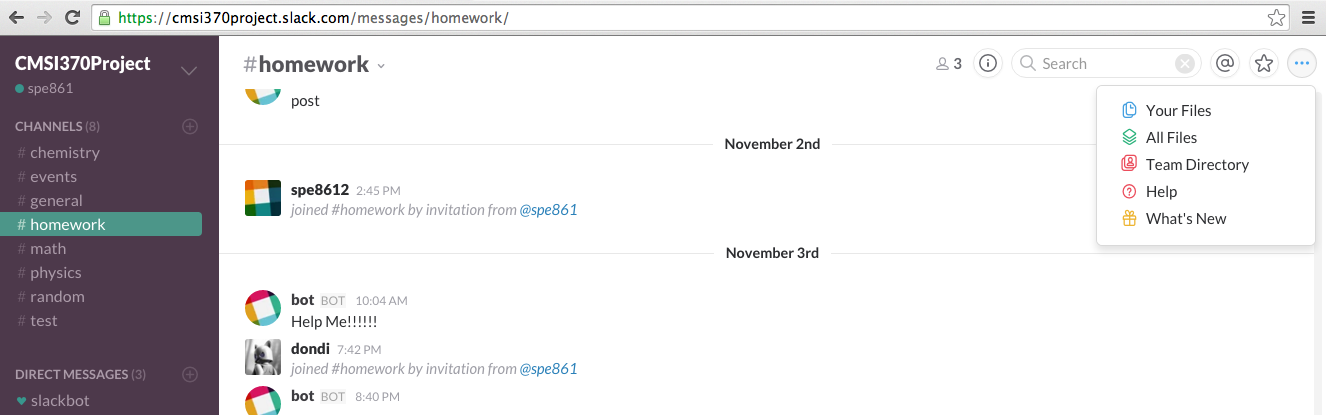
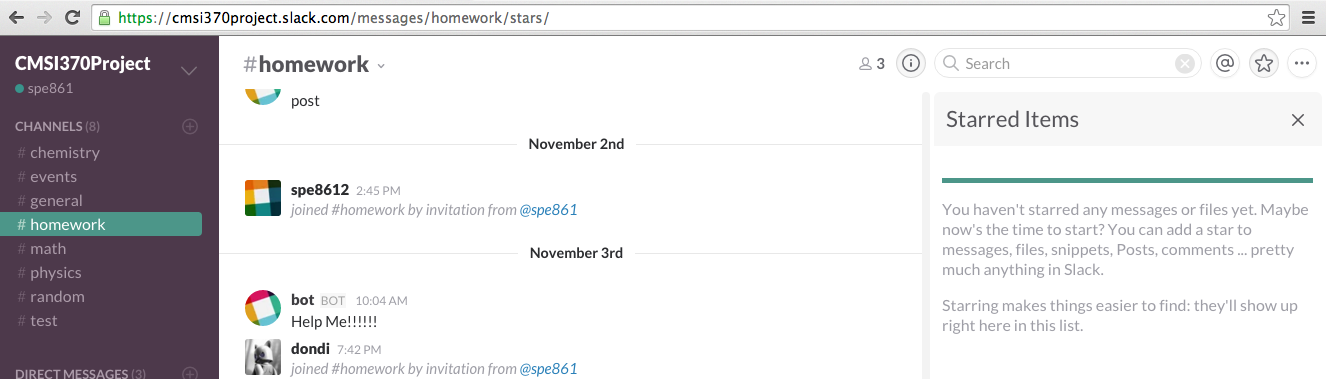
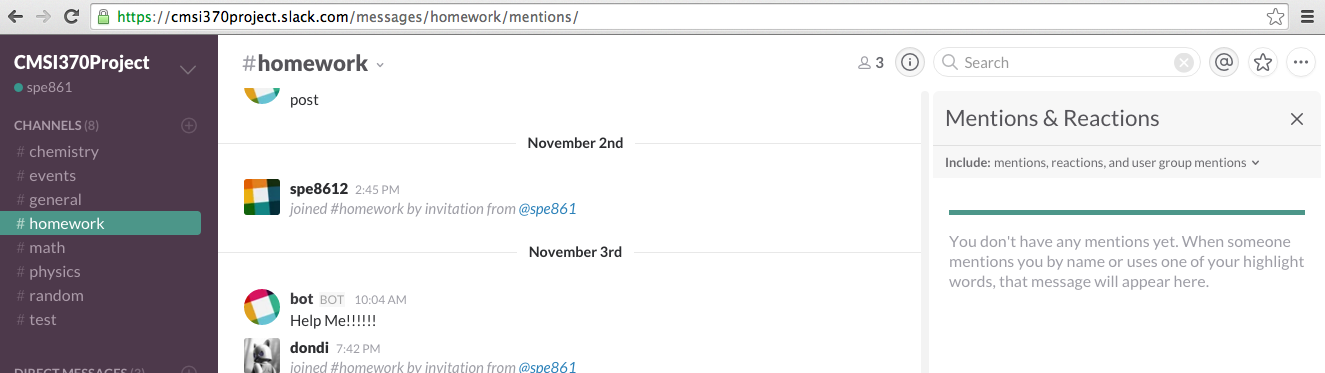
Pretty standard and user-friendly so far . . .





Whoa, wait a second . . . didn’t we just see a “notification preferences” in the #homwork menu? For some reason, there is another noification preferences option in the “…” menu on the top right. Sure, the previous one said “Channel notification preferences,” but the title at the top of the “…” menu still says “About #homework” and has “Notification Preferences” as an option too. On a learnability side, that is probably not the best way to organize the channel settings content, not to mention that the settings are separated into seven different menus.

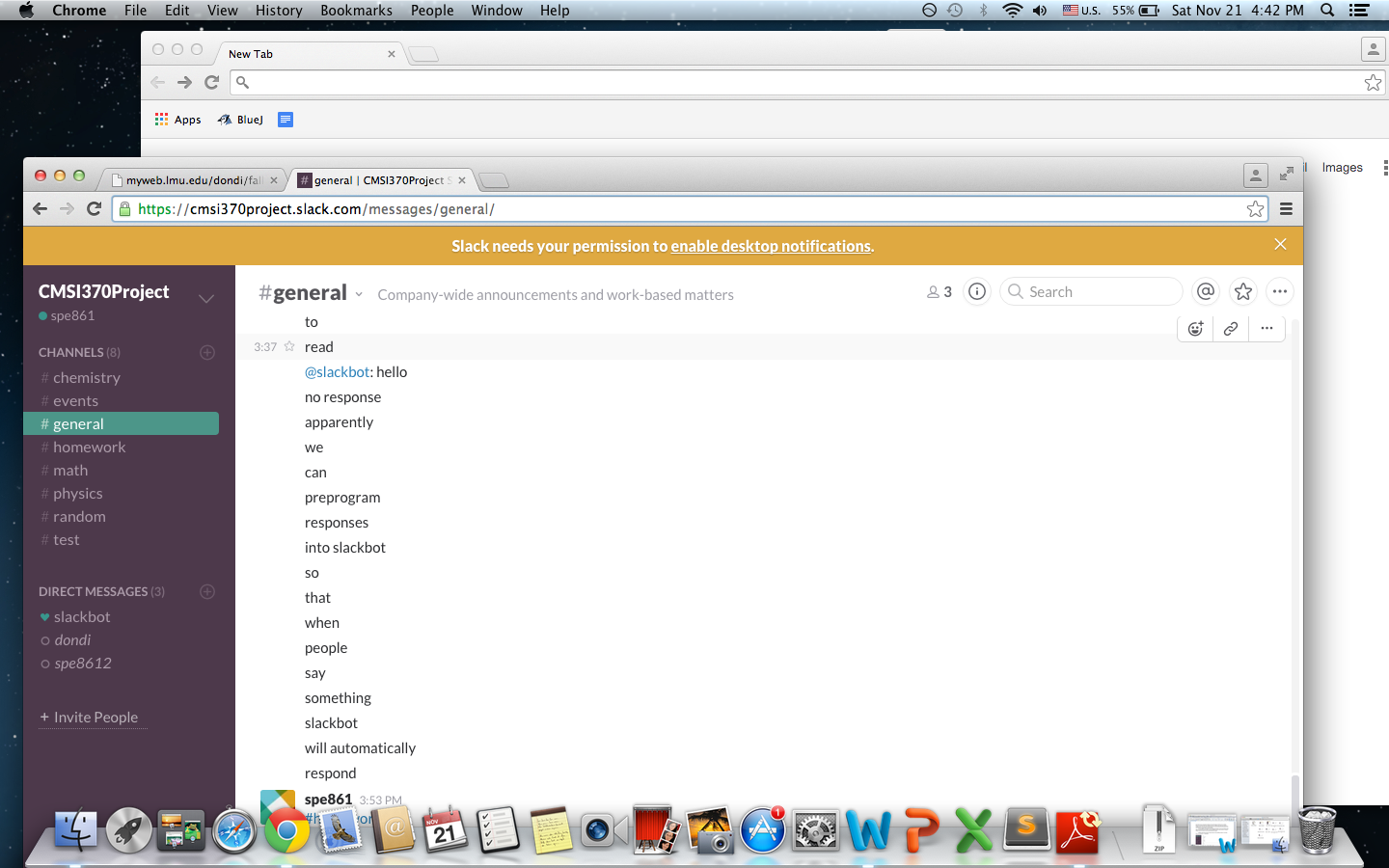
Immediately, users can spot what is either redundancy or excess separation of concerns between the two different “#homework” menus above. The rest seems to be pretty pretty straightforward . . .



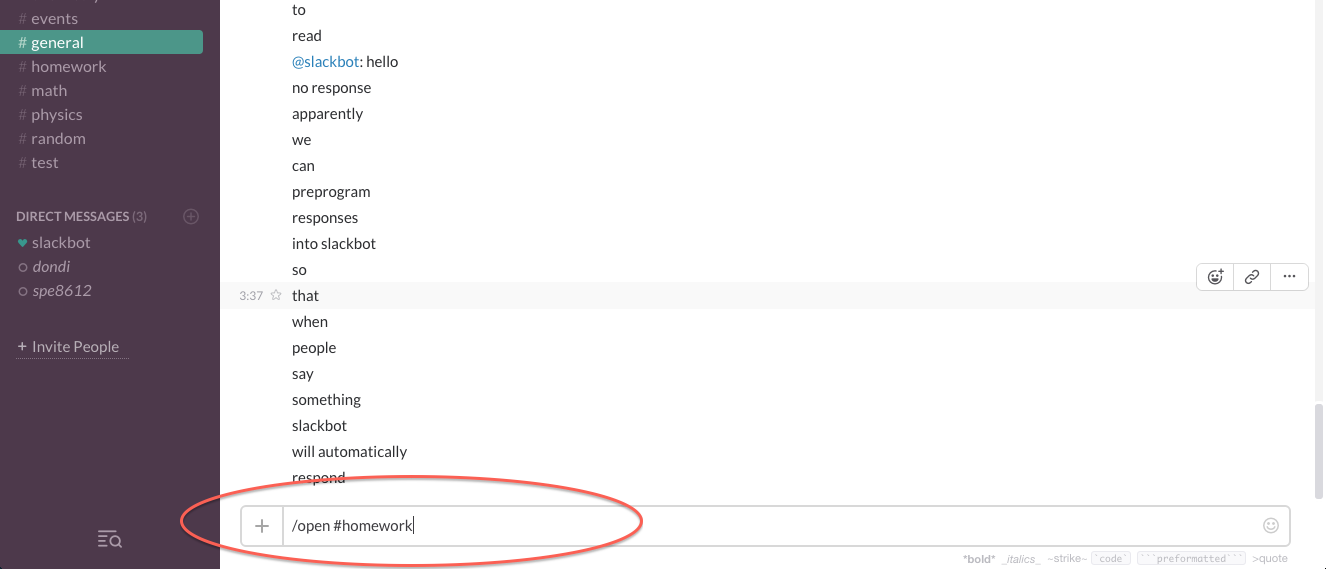
Still, it does seem like there are a few too many menus with some scattered options.

Slack is well-designed in that it has a simple interface, with lots of uncluttered space that doesn’t overwhelm visually. This also allows for bigger text so users don’t have to strain their eyes to read posts. Perhaps, the only downside is that the more complex features are buried within the settings and open to a different tab when users want to configure them. This may add to the learning curve to more advanced functionality (if the users decide to look for them in the first place).

It is also slightly annoying how the message input field is on the very bottom of the page. This becomes an issue when a user has multiple windows open and has to drag the window back to be able to see the input field before typing.



Another aspect that could use improvement is the quickkeys options. Currently, they are invoked as “/” commands.



It is still pretty fast, but slightly more tedious than using quick keys directly from the keyboard to move through the channels listed on the left.

2. Perhaps there is a more effective layout for Slack’s interface that accounts for these small inconsistencies.