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% Start MATLAB or Octave on your machine.  You get a prompt like this:

>>

% Now try a few simple commands.

>> diary on    % Causes Matlab to save a record of the session in a
                % file named diary.  Later you can edit this file,
                % print it out, turn it in as homework, or whatever.
                % For more information about diary, type 'help diary'

>> a = .0256

a =

    0.0256

>> b = -78; c = .0142; % The semicolon suppresses printing.
>> format long % Changes format of output.
>> c

c =

    0.0142000000000000

>> format long e    % For more information on formats, type "help format"
>> c

c =

    1.4200000000000000e-02

>> hb = b/2;
>> disc = sqrt(hb^2-a*c)

disc =

    3.899999533948690e+01

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>> exit

% Some other commands: "help" "help help"

% Chances are, you are running a modern version of MATLAB with
% a GUI interface. In this case you can do lots of things using
% the pulldown menus and so on. There is a built-in
% editor and a help browser.
%
% There is an Octave manual at the Octave web site. (Click on Docs.)
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