1 Welcome to TAing!
Welcome to the teaching staff of the College of Computing at Georgia Tech! We appreciate your help in supporting our teaching mission. This document lays down the ground rules of being a TA and gives you some suggestions on how to do your job well.

1.1 Starting out as a TA
The Undergraduate TA Qualifications are:

- A or B in course you are TAing for
- Good Academic Standing (i.e., not warning, probation, nor review)
- Overall GPA > 2.5
- CS/ECE GPA > 3.0
- Sophomore, Junior, or Senior

As you start your job:

- Be sure to fill out all the necessary paperwork, including a PSF from Financial Services and paperwork at OHR
- Fill out CoC Account forms
- Get a key to the TA lab ($10 security deposit)
- Check your States cluster access

## 2 Conduct Expectations

Undergraduate teaching assistants in the College of Computing have a position of authority and respect. Such authority and respect comes with a commensurate requirement of responsible use of that authority. They serve as leaders and models in the community, and must behave as such. This implies:

- Criticism of peer TAs, instructors, and classes should be respectable. Private criticism made directly to individuals is preferable to public criticism. Treat your co-workers in this job as you would in any other job — with due respect.
- Language in public on-line forums should be polite and be without obscenity or sexual reference.
- In general, the undergraduate TA should be using his or her position to help create a positive academic environment, where discussion is encouraged in a polite and respectful manner.

Penalties for inappropriate behavior will range from a reprimand, to suspension from TA responsibilities for some period of time, to dismissal, depending on severity of the offense and how often the offense has occurred.

### 2.1 Newsgroups

Newsgroups (and other collaborative spaces, such as CoWebs) are class resources and should be treated as such. You should act professional at all times on Georgia Tech (i.e., those whose names start with `git.xxx`) newsgroups. This means no flaming students, even if they started it, as well as keeping the idle pratter to a minimum. Most importantly, think before you post. Remember that your answer to a question can obligate the course to act according to
your response, but you’re not the one that sets policy. When in doubt, hold off posting until you can ask somebody who knows. Do not post to announce groups unless you have explicit permission from an instructor or head TA.

Regardless of your SIG line, you are expected to uphold professional expectations. While you are in the employ of the College of Computing, you are NOT just another student. You are known as an employee of the College, so your behavior in class newsgroups (yours and others) should always be professional. Flame newsgroups are strange beasts. People do get into serious trouble for saying things there. As a general rule, don’t flame your students — period.

2.2 Don’t date your students

Part of the reality of being an undergraduate TA is that you’re also a student and as such you’re probably going to know other students who may be taking the class (especially classes that have a few thousand students).

First and foremost, DO NOT DATE YOUR STUDENTS. Don’t flirt with your students, don’t be coy with your students, and don’t have affairs with your students. Involvement with a student that you have some power over can be construed as harassment. You have control over your students’ grades, and as such you should do nothing that would even imply that anything other than their performance in the class will affect that grade.

As a corollary, you shouldn’t have a relationship any of your students prior to the semester starting. If you do have a relationship with any of them let somebody know (head TA, instructor, or somebody who can move them out of your section). As a general rule of thumb avoid anything that could be considered a conflict of interest.

What about if you’re already dating somebody and they need to take the class? First and most importantly, let the instructor know about it. What gets Presidents impeached? It’s not the crime, it’s the coverup. Same thing applies here. There will be penalties if we find out that you’re dating somebody in the class and didn’t tell us. Once you inform the instructor, steps will be taken to make sure that you are not involved in grading anything for the person you’re dating. We can accomodate this by TA/section assignments or asking you to adjust your TA assignment for the semester. Please remember that you shouldn’t give them any inappropriate assistance either.

There is also the issue of making sure that no one gets the wrong idea about your relationship with your students. Don’t hold office hours in a non-public place. Your dorm room is not an acceptable place to meet with your students.

2.3 How to act when you’re not “on duty”

- You should not discuss the class when you’re not “on duty”. So let’s say you’re at a party on a Saturday night and one of your students also happens to be there. While that’s not an ideal situation, life happens. You don’t have to run away and pretend like you can’t see them or something, just use your good judgement and don’t discuss the class. If somebody
brings it up just smile and say something like “It’s the weekend. I don’t wanna think about work now.”

- Also, to avoid a conflict of interest, you’re not allowed to be a paid tutor while you’re also a TA. That includes campus organizations too, not just individuals. If you want to hold a help session that’s great, but there are ways of doing that so nobody gets an unfair advantage (and the CoC will pay you).

What if somebody catches me in the food court and wants to talk about their homework grade? Despite how it may occasionally feel, you’re not a slave to the class you TA for. If you haven’t scheduled to meet the student you’re under no obligation to go back on the clock when you’d rather eat your lunch. Politely tell the student that you’re not working at the moment, but if they’ll send you an e-mail you’ll be glad to schedule a time when you can meet to discuss it.

Be careful not to advise students.

1. If students have questions about dropping, direct them to the instructor.
   If students have questions about classes to take and pre-requisites, send them to their advisor. It’s not your job to tell students that they can/can’t and should/shouldn’t take.

2. Remember that many of them may not be your major. Degree requirements differ drastically between programs.

3. It isn’t possible for you to be able to give good academic advice to everyone, so be careful and just don’t do it.

2.4 Academic Misconduct

Expect to be treated even more harshly than a non-TA undergrad if you’re ever found guilty of academic misconduct. At a minimum you’re fired with no chance of ever being rehired. We simply cannot have individuals involved in helping students gain an education who have violated basic academic fundamentals.

3 Doing Your Job

Your specific tasks will depend on your class. Be sure to talk to your instructor about what you need to do.

In general, you will be expected to:

- **Grade:** BE ON TIME! Late grading is grounds for dismissal.

BE CONSISTENT! As much as possible, reward or subtract the same points for the same work. Apply any given criteria as-is. If you have questions about the criteria, take them to the instructor—do not modify the criteria on your own. Where there’s flexibility in the criteria, keep
notes when you’re grading so that you remember what you took points off for.

It is absolutely critical that you get your grades in for the two big grading periods of the term: Midterm and Final grades. The midterm grading will be a satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade so-far on the course. Your instructor must have all grades ready before that date.

- **Office Hours**: You will be expected to hold office hours. Be present, be on-time, and be prepared.

- **Exams**: You will be expected to proctor and grade exams, both midterms and finals.

- **Communications**: You will be expected to read and respond to email at least once a day on weekdays and once a weekend. You should also follow and respond in class newsgroups (or CoWebs, WebCT, or other discussion spaces).

- **If in doubt, ask!**

### 3.1 Time Expectations

You should average 15 hours/week, with a maximum 20 hours. If you work more than 20 hours a week, you need to contact your instructor and the Director of Student Services as appropriate.

Time sheets are due every 2 weeks. Always give a complete and accurate account of hours worked. Do not simply report 15 hours every week — report the truth. It’s a crime (not just College or Institute policy) for a state employee to inaccurately report time worked.

### 3.2 Recitation sections

You should show up on time (preferably five minutes early) and prepared. If your course has recguide you should have read it before recitation starts. Also, if the recitation guide has something like “WORK THIS EXAMPLE” or “BE SURE TO DO THIS” then make sure you work that example or do that. Those sorts of things make sure that no students are at a disadvantage if we decide to give away a homework question or give a hint.

Don’t let one or two students monopolize the recitation. If somebody keeps trying to bring discussion back to their homework grade or their problems with their code or with something that they still don’t understand from three weeks ago while the rest of the section gets it, it’s appropriate to say something like “Why don’t we discuss this after class one-on-one.”

### 3.3 How to give a test

- Show up early.
• Make sure you have enough tests for the people who will be in your room.

• Take up Buzzcards when you hand out tests for large classes. (Check with your instructor for class-specific policy on this.)

• No hats/visors/sunglasses/extra paper/etc. You can ask students to move their belongings to the front of the room if something’s not quite right.

• Write the starting and ending times in big numbers on the board. Announce 30, 10, 5 and 1 minute(s) left.

• In large classes, there are at least two TA’s per room. At least one of you should be watching the room at all times. Try to answer questions quickly.

• If you suspect academic misconduct:
  – Get your partner(s) to also observe, if you’re not alone.
  – Use Buzzcards to verify/figure out who the student(s) are.
  – Do NOT make any marks on the test(s).
  – Do not confront the student(s).
  – Afterwards report the names and gt-numbers to the instructor along with what you and your partner saw.

• Make sure writing stops when time is called. Immediately collect any remaining tests. If a student refuses to give the test back or to stop writing then just leave without his/her test. Don’t try to forcefully take the test from them; they just get a zero.

3.4 What to do if you suspect academic misconduct on homeworks and other out of class assignments

• Report it to the instructor.

• Forget about it. They’ll take action as appropriate. Don’t say anything to the student or anybody else about it. Don’t grade any differently. It’s out of your hands. By reporting it, you have done everything that you need to do.

  Do not make accusations, do not make ANY notations on the paper, and do not take any unilateral action (such as email to the student or, far worse, mentioning it on a newsgroup). Students have a right to due process, and that process involves the student, the teacher, and the Dean of Students — NOT you! If you step in, you may be depriving the student of his or her rights, and lawsuits may follow.
3.5 Learning more about teaching

If you get interested and want to learn more about how to be a better teacher, terrific! A good starting place is the Center for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (http://www.cetl.gatech.edu). They can offer you seminars and leads on teaching resources. You might also look into the Proceedings of the ACM SIGCSE (SIG on Computer Science Education) conference. There is also a weekly seminar on Research in Computer Science Education — ask Allison Tew or Kurt Eiselt for information on where the seminar is being held and when.