Mathematica Dos and Don'ts: Getting Started

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DON'T use *Mathematica* as a substitute brain; use it only when you have to. And remember, **THINK BEFORE YOU CALCULATE**.

DON'T run a notebook from a floppy! Transfer it to the hard drive and run it from there.

DO save your notebook *frequently* during a session.

DON'T save your notebook directly to a floppy disc! Save it to the hard disc, then transfer it.

DO start *Mathematica* first if you have to run another program simultaneously.

DO make extensive use of *Mathematica*'s on-line help facilities.

circumstances	on-line help resource
if you can't remember the full name of a command	use `Complete Selection`
if you can't remember the syntax of a command	use `Make Template`
if you want to learn how to do something	in the `Help Browser`, choose `Master Index`

You can find `Complete Selection` and `Make Template` under the `Input` menu. In a notebook, access brief information about a command by typing `?` followed by the command name; `??` gets you more information about the command. If you can't remember a command name, use wildcards (example: `?*Plot*` gives all *Mathematica*'s plot commands). To get information about options to a command, use `Options`.

DO explore the following useful items in the Help Browser:

1. to find out how to use the Browser: **Getting Started: Using the Help Browser**;
2. to find out what the menu commands do: **Other Information: Menu Commands**;
3. to find a list of all *Mathematica*'s special characters: **The Mathematica Book: Reference Guide: Listing of Named Characters**;
4. to find out how to load packages: **Add-ons: Working with Add-ons: Loading Packages**;
5. to find out how to enter math expressions that look like math: **Other Information: 2D Expression Input**.

DO polish your notebook before you declare it finished or send it to anyone.

1. Remove all extraneous material (typing errors, trial calculations, exploratory detours).
2. Be sure comments and explanations are all in `Text` or `SmallText` cells and are positioned logically in relation to the relevant *Mathematica* output, etc.
3. Test your notebook: first, click on `Kernel:Delete All Output`; then `Kernel:Quit:Local`, and finally click on `Kernel:Evaluate:EvaluateNotebook`. Fix any errors.