CS15 TA Hours Policy Fall 2018

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 almost 200 TA hours can be found here.

CS15 uses a waiting-in-line program that runs in Google Sheets. To sign up for hours, go the Fishbowl and add your name to the queue on the designated sign up computer (the one closest to the door). A TA will call your name/login outside the Fishbowl when it is your turn.

Outline of policies

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 have been instructed to turn away students who cannot provide evidence of attempting to solve their problem on their own.**
2. The sign-up system has a field for "Question." This should be filled in with a specific question. A question like "LiteBrite Question" is not sufficient and may be turned away. Something like "Unexpected squares are removed when trying to clear lines in my Tetris" is an example of a good and specific question. TAs can only help with one question/bug per visit.
3. To be fair to other students in line, each TA hours visit is capped at 15 minutes.
4. The sign-up system allows you to sign up once per hour (even if there is no line).
5. 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.
6. If you do not show up within 15 minutes of your name being called, you will lose your spot in line. There are consequences for repeatedly not showing up for hours you sign up for - remove yourself from the queue to avoid this.
7. 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.
8. Use your "fair share" of TA hours, especially for debugging questions. TA Hours are not explicitly *debugging* hours; they are hours to receive tools to debug on

your own, and initial guidance in approaching these bugs. We want you to get the help you need, which is why we hold more hours than any other course, but keep in mind that struggling through hard bugs on your own is the fastest route to becoming an expert debugger.

9. Due to the relatively short nature of the first two projects, AndyBot and LiteBrite, there will be a strict no-code-editing policy in place during TA Hours for these projects. This policy is to ensure that students learn critical debugging tools from the very beginning on their own, not *just* through the help of a TA.

Conceptual Line

Starting with the project Fruit Ninja, we will offer a separate "no-code" line during TA hours. This line will be for questions that are conceptual in nature and that do not pertain to project, thus prohibiting looking at code. There will be a separate field on the sign-ups to indicate "No code." This line can be used for conceptual, clarification, or design questions. It should not be used for debugging or code-specific questions. That is to say that a conceptual question about variables would be appropriate for the conceptual line, while asking "how would I use variables in Fruit Ninja" would be appropriate for the standard hours line.