

Last Conversation: The final is coming up

Winfried Just
Department of Mathematics, Ohio University

MATH 3200: Applied Linear Algebra

The final is coming up, now what?

Alice: Hi all! The course is over and the final is coming up.

Frank: I noticed.

Denny: How on earth are we going to prepare for that?

Bob: It helps to start reviewing early, and I already did. It is all coming together when you look at the entire material at once.

Cindy: I'm wondering: Will the final be difficult?

Alice: It's a lot of material and the course was challenging.

Denny: You can say that!

Alice: I liked the challenges, but the purpose of the final is not to ask particularly difficult questions.

Bob: I think the instructors just want us to demonstrate on the final that we have learned the entire material. So the questions should be of similar scope and difficulty as the ones on the quizzes and homework.

So how should we prepare?

Denny: Which means I should go over all my quizzes and focus on reviewing the stuff where I lost points.

Frank: I'll look at the things that don't make sense to me. And that's a lot!

Theo: We should start by making sure we understand all the concepts, especially the ones covered in Chapter 3. We need to really understand what each question is asking about. Then we should be able to work out the correct answers.

Bob: We also need to know how to perform the standard procedures, like Gaussian elimination, step by step. The best would be to go over all the sample solutions of the questions in the modules.

Denny: But there were too many of them!

Alice: Not all of them, but the ones on the list of suggested review problems. Make sure we understand them and would be able to do similar ones.

So how should we prepare?

Cindy: And we should also go over the templates for proofs. There will be some proofs on the final, right?

Bob: Right! That's what we were told.

Alice: And we should study the applications that were covered. The concepts and procedures of linear algebra make a lot more sense if we think about what they mean in the context of particular applications.

Denny: But there was so much stuff covered!

Frank: Too much, if you ask me.

Bob: The chapter outlines and summaries at the end of each lecture give some guidance as to what was covered and where you can find it.

And don't panic!

Cindy: But if I draw a blank on some question?
That happens all the time to me, especially on finals.

Alice: Don't panic. You can figure it out.
We have seen that you can do it. Right?

Bob: Yes, Cindy! We have all seen that you can do it.

Alice: So then take a deep breath and tell yourself:
"I can figure it out." And then do exactly as you did here with us,
figure it out step by step. Don't rush, don't panic.

Frank: Yes, Cindy! You can do it!

Denny: We are all rooting for you!

Cindy: Thank you all soo much!

(Gives everybody a big hug.)

Good bye, Theo!

Theo: (Slightly embarrassed) Need to go now. It has been a great pleasure working with you all. Thank you all for our discussions!

Bob: Thank you, Theo, for sharing your insights with us!

Denny: After the final, I'll throw a huge party at my place. Got a big screen TV, 50 sports channels, a pool table, darts. You coming, Theo? All beverages will be on the house.

Theo: Not my cup of tea.

Denny: Come on, Theo!
To round out your educational experience.

Theo: If you look at it this way, yes, I will gladly accept. Thank you, Denny, for the invitation!

Denny: Great! You are most welcome.

(Denny texting Theo about the details; Theo leaves)

Good bye, Bob and Cindy!

Bob: Time to go, yes. Has been a great pleasure working with you. Thank you all so much! And good luck on the final!

Frank: Same to you, Bob!

Denny: Thank you for all your help!

Alice: It was wonderful meeting you and working with you, Bob. All the best for your future!

Cindy: Thank you, thank you, thank you! Frank, Denny, and especially Alice! You are such wonderful persons! Without all your help, I wouldn't know how to succeed in this course.

Frank: But now you will do well on the final.

Denny: Believe us!

Alice: It was such a joy working with you, Cindy. You can do these math problems really, really well. Yes, you can!

Cindy: (Gives Alice another big hug.) Shall we, Bob?
(Bob and Cindy leave together)

Good bye, Denny!

Denny: Wow! I didn't know that there was something going on between Bob and Cindy.

Alice: You didn't notice?

Frank: None of your business anyway, Denny.

Denny: Whatever. Well, gotta go now. Guess I will need to pull an all-nighter before that final. Thank you, Frank, for helping me along with the occasional fallacies in my arguments, as Theo would put it. And thank you, Alice, for all your help! Really appreciate it. Maybe I'll somehow manage on that final.

Frank: Thank you, Denny! Was really great to have you around in this group. Good luck on the final!

Denny: Thank you, Frank! Will need it.

Alice: Just make sure to always double-check every step of your work and you will do fine, Denny. Believe me!

Denny: Thank you, Alice! Was great meeting you! Bye all!

Good-bye, Alice!

Frank: Well Alice, I don't know how to say this—

Alice: You can figure it out. Give it a try!

Frank: I have my own opinion about this course and math in general, and it is different from yours.

Alice: I know.

Frank: But you were like a great teacher to all of us. So I really enjoyed meeting you and us having all our conversations.

Alice: Thank you! I also enjoyed our discussions.

Frank: So now I want to say—

Alice: Yes?

Frank: Thank you Alice and good bye!

Alice: You sound like you wanted to add something.

Frank: Like what?

Good bye, Alice?

Alice: Was it: “Would you like to get together some time after the final and talk about something other than math?”

Frank: How do you know?

Alice: Because that’s exactly what I am asking you now!

Frank: Really? That’s what you want?

Alice: Yes!

Frank: But—but that’s not going to work.

Alice: ???

Frank: Why would you, Alice, the smartest and most wonderful woman on this planet—

Alice: (blushes and forgets to say “Thank you.”)

Frank: —want to go out with a guy like me?

Alice: Because I really, really like you, Frank. A lot. That’s why.

Frank: But I don’t understand—

Alice: I don’t understand it either. It’s just the way it is.

The others suddenly reappear

Frank: But why? But how?

Theo: Seems you would like to develop some conceptual understanding here, Frank. This doesn't work in such situations.

Denny: If you want conceptual understanding, study math, not relationships. Math is a lot easier.

Alice: So shall we go out some time, Frank?

Cindy: Please say "yes" to Alice. Please, Frank, please!!

Bob: Here is your step-by-step procedure, Frank:

Step 1: Say "y" Step 2: Say "e" Step 3: Say "s"

Denny: Hush, Bob! Frank is never going to do as told and follow instructions of another guy!

Frank: (Keeps staring in disbelief)

Alice: So, after the final, that same evening, 8p.m.?

Frank: Deal!!!

Good Luck to all of you on the final!