



Randall Munroe, XKCD: A webcomic of romance, sarcasm, math, and language. Available at: <http://xkcd.com/670/>. Accessed 26 January 2010.

Checkpoint Reports

- This is generalized feedback from the GTAs regarding evaluation of Checkpoint Report #1.

Checkpoint Reports

- Padding reports by providing too much detail is not a good idea!
- Be concise!
- Emphasize *results*. i.e. Rather than outlining what you have been learning, demonstrate it!
- Day-by-day reporting is not in alignment with a summary.

Checkpoint Reports

- Do not assume that the reader (supervisor) can remember much, or that your supervisor won't pass the reading of reports to someone else.
- Do not provide unnecessary detail: knowing how, for instance, that you connected a scope probe to measure a signal is too much information!
- Don't wait around to do work, even if part arrival times are presenting delays!

Speaking of Schedules...

- How are you and your group doing at keeping up with the work?
- Is there a lower threshold of work that below which you find you become less effective? An upper threshold?
- Maintaining a (project) schedule can help.
- What follows are some tools/tips that might help you get work done.

“Set Up!”

- Get ready for the next step in the process.
- Don't **do** the work, just get set up for the next step.

eg) Suppose you need to characterize the frequency response of a microphone. By setting up for this, you might gather the parts for the circuit and create the table you are going to record information in.

- Weird things happen you take this approach. Note your own response!

“Loads of Other Stuff”

- Don't spend too much time looking for something you need to do a job: switch to one of the many other tasks instead.
- eg) You need a Philips screwdriver to continue work on something, but you can't find it. Look for the screwdriver for, say 5 minutes. If you can't find it, proceed down another path.
- Chances are you will find the screwdriver during progress on the other item!

“Digestion Time”

- Similar to the last approach, but for different reasons.
- When stuck on a problem, consider leaving it alone for while by moving on to another problem:
 - a different perspective develops
 - allows time for subconscious processing: leaving a problem alone does not mean leaving it behind
 - progress is made on other valuable work

“Divide and Conquer”

- Modular work breakdowns are very useful as a sequence of work becomes apparent.
- Dividing the work up and doing a small portion of it over many days can help with tasks that are boring or difficult.
- This requires discipline to do: the project schedule and the other approaches may help!