

To the instructor using “The Language of Mathematics”

I have taught this course many times and know that it is not critical that your students enter the course good at math. However, **it is critical that they read the text**. Most students do not read math texts, so that requires a change and **you** must make it happen, right away. **Figure out how to make them read and realize they can learn by reading.**

- 1) Repeatedly tell your students this is a language course for a foreign language,
(You might comment that the language of mathematics is designed to express thoughts about “things” that cannot be conveniently expressed in English) and
- 2) No one gets good at a language without participating
That is, reading, writing, and speaking
- 3) You, the instructor, must **make** them participate with in-class work and daily homework
- 4) Make them participate by asking smiley-face questions from the text
(possibly at the end of class or the beginning of the next class)
For example, in 1.2, after going over the order conventions of written mathematics,
Say “Open your book to page 21. We’ll begin with A7a. Jane, what do you get?”
“John, turn to page 22. Pronounce A25.”
If your students get them all right, move on. If not, you have learned something about what they don’t know.

The first day is critical. The course is so different that the expectations of students are usually far wrong. Change the tone immediately. They must learn to read symbolic math, and they won’t if they don’t read at all! Get them to participate immediately.

There is an “Instructor’s Manual” with observations you would make if you had already taught the course. Learn from our experience.