

Philosophy 12A Homework Guidelines and Tips

May 25, 2010

1 Basic Guidelines for HW Submissions

1.1 Formatting Issues

1.1.1 Top Matter

- Homework assignments should have the following information at the top of the first page (preferably, in the top-right corner of the first page).

Name: GSI: Other Group Members (if any): Date:

1.1.2 Organization and Legibility

- The model answers that Forbes gives in the text are a good *starting point* as models to follow. Try to organize your answers with *at least* as much clarity and formality as Forbes does in his answers. More complete and well-organized answers (even typed ones!) are always welcome, of course!
- All answers should be clear and legible. This means you should try to *avoid crossouts*. I urge you to work in *pencil*, and on scratch paper. Before you write down your final answer, you should be pretty sure it's what you intended.
- Make it clear what your *final* answer is, for each question.
- Please *staple* together all HW sheets (in their proper order).

1.2 Non-Formatting Issues

- *Do not leave HW's to the last minute*. The assignments are not going to be trivial. They will be time consuming, and they will often require significant thoughtfulness and care to be completed correctly.
- *Read what Forbes has to say very carefully*. My lectures will not always cover every detail discussed in the text. It is up to you to glean all relevant information from the text, before you try to tackle a homework assignment.

2 Specific Issues and Tips Concerning HW #2

2.1 Mistakes Involving ' \rightarrow ' and ' \leftrightarrow '

- Most of the mistakes on HW #2 will involve mis-translations of sentences involving ' \rightarrow ' and ' \leftrightarrow '.
- Here is a list of different English forms that *all* translate into LSL as ' $p \rightarrow q$ ' (memorize these):

'if p then q '	' p only if q '	' q if p '	' p is sufficient for q '
' q is necessary for p '	' q provided p '	' q whenever p '	' p is contingent upon q '
' p is conditional upon q '	' p is dependent upon q '	' p depends on q '	' p leads to q '
' p guarantees q '	' p implies q '	' p entails q '	' p requires q '

- ' p unless q ' translates into LSL as either ' $\sim q \rightarrow p$ ' or ' $p \vee q$ '.
- Here is a list of different English forms that *all* translate into LSL as ' $p \leftrightarrow q$ ' (memorize these):

' p if and only if q '	' p just in case q '	' p exactly when q '
' p is necessary and sufficient for q '	' p is <i>the one thing</i> that leads to q '	' p when and only when q '

2.2 Other Common Mistakes Likely to be Seen on HW #2

- Use parens and brackets carefully.
 - ' $A \& B \& C$ ' is NOT a sentence of LSL (*missing parens — parens are always required when more than two atomic sentences are involved — even when there is no ambiguity*).
 - Neither is ' $A \& B \rightarrow C$ ' (this one can have two *different meanings*, depending on where we put the missing pair of parens).
 - Neither is ' $(\sim A) \vee B$ ' (*extra parens around ' $\sim A$ ' — negation takes smallest possible scope*).
- Atomic sentences should always be *positive*. Avoid atoms like:
 - Van Gogh's pictures are *not* the most profound.
 - Smith is *dishonest*.
- Avoid *redundant* atoms. For instance, avoid having both of the following in your dictionary:
 - A : The government will rig the election.
 - B : The government will play fair. [Here, B is just the *denial* of A , and can be expressed as ' $\sim A$ ']
- Of course, atoms must *never* contain any sentential connectives (*e.g.*, 'depends on', 'but', 'if', *etc.*).
- Sometimes, the conclusion of an English argument is *its very first sentence*.
- Think through how you might express 'just one' or 'at least two', *etc.* in LSL
- When formatting truth-tables, make sure to place the atoms in *alphabetical order* (left-to-right).