

OFFICIAL MEMO

FROM: Headquarters, SSTP-Math  
TO: Parents of former SSTP\* participants  
ON: Re-adjustment to civilian life

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Every year parents of SSTP participants find that they cannot quite cope with the problems that are suddenly thrust upon them when their sons and daughters return from Columbus. This list of guidelines has been prepared in an effort to guide these bewildered parents.

1. Sleep. Allow 72 hours before trying to awaken your participant. Then nudge him gently and ask him if he's hungry. Getting no answer, shake him vigorously and tell him it's time to eat. This should work. If it doesn't, wait 24 hours and repeat.
2. Feed. Feed is a controversial subject with former SSTP members. Under any circumstances, DO NOT SERVE (during the first week) mashed potatoes, stew, wilted lettuce, or diluted kool-aid. PLEASE DO SERVE real meat, chops, steak, roasts, green (not brown) cooked vegetables, all raw vegetables except lettuce, melon, and decent desserts.
3. Snacks. The first day you will probably notice your son or daughter taking some cereal with him as he leaves breakfast. Inform him that the Commons is open 24 hours a day, and therefore he can leave his cereal and come back for it later. He will probably come back, but not for cereal. Do not act surprised the first time you find him eating a 3 A.M. snack. You would, too, if you ate the same junk we did. You probably will have to explain to him that there exist other kinds of fruit besides apples and oranges.
4. Homework. Do not start right off by telling your SSTP participant that there is no homework. He wouldn't understand what you were talking about.

\* In this memo, SSTP refers only to SSTP-Math, and not to SSTP-Engineers, who never did any work anyhow.

4. (cont.) If you are given any homework to grade, take it firmly but gently and hide it somewhere. He'll never ask for it again. If he asks you for more problem sheets, nobody could possibly imitate Dr. Koss's handwriting, so just tell him the ditto machine is broken and ask him if he wants to take a nap, play tennis, go swimming, have a snack, or do anything else until the urge to work goes away. We guarantee it won't take long.

5. Customs. Uspensky, Maslet, Vinogradov, Birkhoff, MacLane, Herdy, and Wright write textbooks. Avoid mentioning their names at all costs. It will not be hard to avoid unique factorization, division algorithm,  $\mathbb{Z}_p$  (read Z sub-p), and  $\mathbb{Q}[x]$  (read Q square brackets x) since these terms do not come up often in general conversation. For algebra students, you say vector space, basis, linearly (in)dependent, characteristic value or vector only at the risk of your life. The following synonyms are offered as a guide:

DO NOT SAY

group  
ring  
field

USE INSTEAD

collection  
circle  
meadow

6. During the first week, former participants have a tendency to go into unaccountable trances a few times a day and say things such as the following:

- a. If a divides b, and b divides c,...
- b. If a is a member of B, then B is not the null set.
- c. The symbol Legendre is never used if p is composite.
- d.  $n > 1, n \in \mathbb{Z} \Rightarrow \phi\left(n \left[ \frac{\sigma(n)}{n} \right] \right) < n$ .

Try to ignore this. It is temporary and not dangerous. A week of vacation should cure it completely.

7. Any further questions should be addressed to this office, Columbus, Ohio, 226656 (base 7). Don't ask any questions during the first three days, because we'll be sleeping it off, too.

8. Good luck! (Remember that all of the 1958 participants have been cured by now, so there's still hope.)