Tips for Using Solution Manuals

Solutions manuals are a supplemental resource – they are not meant to replace reading primary texts, attending lecture, or attempting problems on your own. The tips in this handout demonstrate how and when to integrate solutions manuals into your studying. The goal is not to get the correct final answer. The goal is to learn the process to solve problems.

Step 1: Prepare Yourself to Solve Problems
- Attend class.
- Read the primary text.
- Review your notes from class and the primary text.

Step 2: Solving Problems on Your Own
- Read the problem carefully. Reread for understanding.
- If any part of the problem does not make sense, seek clarification. (For example, look up definitions, theories, formulas, etc.)
- Identify connections between the information provided by the problem and the solution expected.
- Set up the problem, and attempt to solve the problem on your own.

Step 3: Reviewing Your Solution
- Check your solution:
  - Does your answer seem reasonable?
  - Do units of measure look accurate?
  - If uncertain, attempt the problem again, and comparing solutions.
- Reference the Solution Manual:
  - Compare final answers. If not matching, review your work again.
  - If you are stuck or have the wrong final answer, compare the first line of your solution with the first line in the solution manual. Focus on understanding the difference.
  - Compare line by line until you understand the similarities and differences, and have a reason to change your solution. Ultimately, understanding the solution process is more valuable than reaching the correct final answer. Modify your solution, and attempt to solve again on your own.
  - Refer again to the solution manual only as needed.

Reminders:
- Solution manuals provide one possible solution process. In many cases, there are multiple correct processes that will result in the correct final answer.
- Many students find greater success by maintaining variables in solutions and solving for the unknown variable, before writing in given numbers.
- Minor differences in final answers may have resulted from rounding.
- Solution manuals are references that may also contain errors.