The TAs hold office hours to help students clarify their understanding of the material. Problems getting the homework done is a common reason to see a TA, maybe the most common. The TA is not there to do the homework. The TA should work with the student to get him or her to the point of understanding the statistical idea necessary to do the homework. The student has to be working too.

If the problem is that the student is misinterpreting what the question asks, then the TA should help the student figure out what is being asked.

If the problem is simply that R does not work the way the student expects, then the TA should just explain what the error is. For us, R programming is a tool, we use it because not everything can or should be done by calculus, but it is not the main point of the course.

Another kind of problem that sometimes comes up is that the problem has a serious typo or for some other reason does not even make sense. That should be brought to my attention ASAP. I’ll send out a note via axess.

If lots of people show up with questions then the TA should do a rotation from person to person. That may involve working through one question per person. The first person does not necessarily get the whole session. After all, somebody else might have had a just before that at the other side of campus.

The TA might also find that some question is of interest to a lot of students. In that case the TA could choose to work through questions in the order of how many people have the question.