WeBWorK Orientation Talking points

1. Problems are pretty well debugged. If it says your answer is wrong, it is very likely wrong.
2. Webwork checks formulas using a sampling method. If your answers are within a tolerance for these samples, the formula is counted correct. This means that there may be many different ways to write the correct answer. Changing the order of terms will not change your answer.
3. Do not waste your limited attempts on guesses. If the answer is counted wrong, rework the problem, checking for places where there may be an error or an incorrect assumption. A common error when calculating phase is to use atan(.), which gives only phases within the range [-pi/2, pi/2]. You'll miss the answer if the phase is in the second or third quadrant.
4. Use your attempts wisely. Webwork can count only the number of submissions. If you have a multiple part question, Webwork will usually indicate which part is wrong. It is better to answer all parts of a question that are independent of each other for an attempt.
5. If you are stuck at one part that prevents you from going to the next part, don't continue to use attempts to try to find the answer. First review the material in the textbook related to the problem. Consider using the message board to ask for conceptual help from other students, TAs or the instructor. Do not give details of your specific problem. If that doesn't work, use the "email the instructor" button to ask the instructor about the details of your problem. Using this button allows the instructor, or support staff, to see your exact problem and what you have entered. Emailing the instructor outside of Webwork is counterproductive, since the instructor cannot see you specific problem.
6. Each problem is keyed to specific problems in the textbook. Use the text to review the methods related to your problem. For questions about the presentations or examples in the text, you can use the message board.
7. It is possible that you will need 4-decimal place accuracy for calculated coefficients in the answers. Note that you can usually use calculations in your answers, unless we restrict the answer formats. For example, you might use sqrt(5^2+7^2)/cos(2*pi*0.3) or -27.8377 in your answer. Clearly, the formula would be more accurate, but is not required.
8. Since your will need to type in complicated formulas, use the "preview" button to assure that you have not made a typing error.
9. Multiple choice questions will have more limited number of attempts to discourage guessing. In some cases, there may be multiple correct answers. These type questions are not good candidates for guessing. Reconsider why each possible answer may be wrong or is right.
10. On questions related to Matlab, the best way to assure your answer is correct is to verify the answer using Matlab. In other words, test the candidate solutions in Matlab. This is often a simple copy and paste operation. After all, the intent of the Matlab questions is to teach Matlab. Don't try to short circuit your own learning.

11. Practice: Most problems allow students to use the problem for practice *after the due date and solutions are available*. This is a good way to reinforce learning procedures for solving complicated problems.