

“Problems worthy of attack prove their worth by hitting back”
— ‘Problems’, p. 2 in GROOKS, by Piet Hein

*Dr. Spencer’s Mantra for the relief of anxiety that
accompanies attempts to prove theorems*

The mantra consists of three parts:

1. The **LINES** or **VERSE** [To be chanted slowly, as appropriate, several times]
(It is suggested that if a line has k words, it be chanted k times, shifting the emphasis from word to word.)

The LINES:

WHAT EXACTLY AM I TRYING TO PROVE?
WHAT ARE THE HYPOTHESES? [WHAT MAY I ASSUME?]
WHAT IS THE CONCLUSION I SEEK?
WHAT DO SOME OF THE ELEMENTS LOOK LIKE?
WHY DO I BELIEVE IT?
WHAT IF IT WASN’T SO?

2. The **COMMAND** [To be heeded and obeyed regularly]
WRITE IT DOWN. WRITE IT DOWN CAREFULLY. WRITE IT
DOWN COMPLETELY.

3. The **REFRAIN** [To be repeated as often as necessary, before and after the command]

W H A T D O E S T H A T M E A N ?? [Of course, the mood of the refrain should be changed as the mood of the sentence changes. E.g., WHAT WOULD THAT MEAN?]

If symptoms persist, see your local doctor.