

CALICO

Contest Guide

CALICO Spring '24

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CALICO

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Introduction

Welcome! The California Informatics Competition (CALICO) is a biannual high-school programming competition hosted at UC Berkeley. Our goal is to promote the understanding of useful algorithms and encourage students to grow their problem-solving skills! Alongside these contests, we also have an online Problem Bank where you can practice solving problems with our autograder any time of the day; their test cases and write-ups are all available as learning resources!

CALICO contests are run during the fall and spring season, and consist of a large number of problems meant to be solved in teams. Your goal during this contest is to score as many points as possible by solving problems!

The rest of this guide will go through the structure, rules, and logistics of the competition. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to email us at [**team@calico.berkeley.edu**](mailto:team@calico.berkeley.edu)!

Good luck!

Contest Structure

Contest Format

CALICO will consist of 6 - 12 problems spanning a wide range of difficulties; the contest lasts for 3 hours, during which you can submit as many solutions as you'd like.

Contest Submissions

Submissions to a problem will be run on a set of hidden test cases. These test cases, other than the sample test cases provided to you, will not be visible to participants. Constraints on these hidden test cases can be seen in the "Problem Constraints" section for each problem.

When the autograder runs your submission, it will compare your program's output against the problem's official output. If your program doesn't exceed any restrictions (see "Program Restrictions") and the output is judged as correct, your team will be awarded full points. Otherwise, you will receive feedback from the autograder specifying what went wrong. You can always submit another solution and try again—there is no limit on the number of times you can submit solutions to a problem! Your team is not restricted to using the same language throughout the contest; likewise, attempts at a single problem also do not need to be in the same language.

Contest Scoring

Each problem is assigned a point value approximately based on difficulty—teams will be ranked based on the number of points scored during the duration of the contest. Ties will be broken over penalty time; the team with the lowest penalty time will be ranked first.

Penalty time is assigned as follows:

- Penalty time is only accumulated when a correct submission is made to a problem.
- If you successfully complete a problem x minutes into the contest, your team accumulates x minutes of penalty time.
- For every failed submission to a problem, your team will accumulate 10 additional minutes of penalty time. This extra penalty will only be included if you end up solving the problem.
- Programs that fail to compile do not accumulate penalty time.
- Problem with bonuses will accumulate penalty time for each individual part.

Approved Languages

The following programming languages are approved for CALICO:

- C (std. C18): file extension `.c`
- C++ (std. C++14): file extension `.cpp`, `.cc`, `.cxx`, or `.c++`
- Java (ver. 11): file extension `.java`
- Python3 (ver. 3.11): file extension `.py` or `.py3`

Program Restrictions

Your program must be less than 100KB in size and compile in 30 seconds or less.

Alongside outputting the correct solution, your code must also run within set time and memory limits; submissions must complete running within 1 second* unless otherwise specified and use up to 256MB of memory. These limits are displayed underneath each problem on the autograder "Problemset" interface. Some problems may have different time and memory limits; these differences will be reflected on the autograder site and also in the problem statement.

*Time limits are subject to the following multipliers when a given language is used for a submission:

- C: 1x
- C++: 1x
- Java: 2x
- Python3: 4x

This is to compensate for differing amounts of overhead between languages, and instead place emphasis on algorithmic efficiency.

Problem Ranks

Alongside being assigned different amounts of points, problems are sorted into four ranks (rank 1 through 4).

- **Rank 1** problems should require knowledge of introductory programming concepts (conditions, loops, etc.).
- **Rank 2** problems make use of introductory algorithmic concepts & data structures, involving more problem-solving than Rank 1's.
- **Rank 3** problems may use algorithms or math concepts taught at UC Berkeley, and involve more logical complexity. These problems also typically require some degree of computational efficiency.
- **Rank 4** problems are typically extremely involved, open ended, and rely on a combination of problem-solving and advanced concepts.
- **Bonus** problems, a fifth category, are not assigned a rank; rather, they are paired with existing contest problems. They only differ in terms of the input size or introduce more logical complexity.

The majority of problems in a CALICO contest will be Rank 2 and 3, with the bulk being Rank 2. There will only be a few Rank 4 problems. Bonus problems are worth less points, meant to reward (but not require) particularly efficient solutions. Regardless of rank, we explicitly avoid problems that boil down to the regurgitation of algorithms and libraries—we find it's a lot more fun to problem solve than recite concepts! However, knowledge in algorithms will certainly come in handy when optimizing solutions for more advanced problems.

Problem Types

There are a couple different problem types you can expect to see on a contest. These problem types determine the way your program input and output is handled. These include:

- **Standard** problems have a fixed input and one correct output.
 - For example, finding the sum of two integers is a standard problem because there is only one correct answer.
- **Open** problems have a fixed input, but may have multiple correct outputs. A solution is correct if it outputs any of these.
 - For example, finding any prime number between two integers is an open problem because there may be multiple prime numbers within the range.
- **Interactive** problems are like a two-way conversation between your program and the autograder, where both programs run at the same time. Your program's outputs will be sent to the autograder, whose responses will be sent back as input to your program depending on what it received (and vice versa). This continues until the test case has either been solved or failed. Unlike standard or open problems, neither input nor output is fixed.
 - For example, consider a number guessing game in which you have a certain number of tries to figure out a secret number that has been chosen. After each guess, you're told if it's too high, too low, or correct. If you are not correct, then based on that, you can make another guess, and get another response. This continues until you either guess the right number or run out of tries.

Contest Rules

General Guidelines

- Each team member is allowed to use their own computer with Internet access. You are free to search for resources available online, as long as the code you write is your own.
- You are allowed to use pre-written code during the contest.
- You are only allowed to use standard library functions that are included with your programming language.

Prohibited Activity

- Communication with others outside your team is strictly prohibited. Do not discuss or share solutions with those outside your team.
- All code submitted must be your own or publicly available before the start of the contest. This excludes the templates provided by us.
- Do not submit malicious code. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Attempts to to open network connections.
 - Attempts to slow down the autograder, or create excessively large outputs.
 - Attempts to create files, or modify files/directories' permissions.
 - Attempts to run other programs and create processes.
 - Attempts to work with the operating system registry.
- Teams will be disqualified for any activity that jeopardizes or destabilizes the judging process.

Contest Logistics

Registration Eligibility

The guidelines for team eligibility are as follows:

- CALICO is open to everyone! However, teams with only pre-college students are eligible to win prizes.
 - We define "pre-college student" as anyone who has not entered college/university.
- Teams consist of up to 3 contestants.
- Teams can optionally choose to affiliate with a school or organization during registration.

Team changes (such as adding or substituting team members, moving team members around, etc.) will not be allowed after the registration deadline passes, since we will be generating accounts for the contest.

Referral Program

The CALICO referral program is a flexible and rewarding structure for introducing your friends to CALICO. All participants can take part, whether new to the contest or a veteran of it. **Participants can earn a free CALICO sticker** by making **at least two successful referrals**, with successful being defined by the referee's team solving at least one test set during the contest. The **top referrer will win a signed CALICO T-shirt**.

The registration process for each team member includes a step to enter a referral email, where the referee can include the email of the person who referred them. This will be used to count referrals.

After the contest, all referrers eligible for rewards will be contacted by email asking for shipping information—**they must respond within the deadline listed in the email** in order to claim their reward.

Referrers must compete in and solve at least one test set during the contest for their referrals to be counted. To maintain fairness, **only newcomers can be referred**, and referrals cannot be cyclical. Specifically, referrals will be processed in chronological order of team registration, followed by ascending team member number within teams—any referral that creates a cycle in the existing network of referrals will be voided, and will not count towards any rewards.

Contest Autograder Logistics

CALICO uses DOMjudge to host the contest and judge submissions. After registration closes, all participants will be sent a registration confirmation email containing the username and password to their DOMjudge contest account. These account are separate from accounts on the Problem Bank; contest accounts are not registered on the Problem Bank, and Problem Bank accounts cannot be used for the contest. This email will contain info on how to access the contest site, instructions on how to log in, as well as other relevant information needed for the day of the contest!

Once confirmation emails have been sent out, we will post an announcement on our website saying so. If at that point you have not received any emails from us (and are a registered team member), please contact us immediately at **team@calico.berkeley.edu** with the team information (student names, emails, and organization) you registered under.

The autograder setup will be almost identical to that of the Problem Bank, so we encourage you to set up an account there beforehand to familiarize yourself with the interface.

Clarification Requests

If you are having trouble understanding a problem, or would like to clarify an aspect of a problem during the contest, you can submit a clarification request through the autograder website. Clarification requests are seen and answered by the contest organizers; responses to requests will also appear on the autograder interface. While we cannot give hints or debug code, we may be able to more precisely explain the premise to a problem.

Announcements, errors, and notable clarifications from the contest organizers will be also be published through this interface.

Contest Prize Pool

Winner + Raffle Prizes

Prizes for top-scoring teams and prizes to be raffled off to individuals can be seen on our website, under the FAQ section. Check back often for updates as we expand our prize pool closer to the contest!

Problem Bounties

We may also feature prizes as bounties for certain problems! Bounties accompany existing problems and feature additional challenges that you can pursue (alongside solving the problem itself). These are released at the beginning of the contest. Some bounties we've had before include Code Golf bounties (shortest program to solve the problem) or Speedrun bounties (first X teams to solve the problem).

Raffle Logistics

This contest will feature a raffle to give away additional prizes! The raffle will be run as follows:

1. Contestants will **rank the available raffle prizes** in order of preference (via a form sent out after the contest).
2. Each time ticket is pulled, we give the picked contestant their **highest ranked raffle prize** that is still available.
3. Any contestant who has already won a prize through the raffle has their tickets removed and is **no longer able to get picked again**.
4. This process repeats until all prizes have been taken.

You can win raffle tickets in the following ways:

- **+10 tickets** for the first correct solution your team submits during the contest (to any test set!)
- **+1 ticket** for every additional test set anyone on your team solves!

To ensure fairness, we'll use a program that pulls tickets using a random number generator. The code for this program will be published after contest registrations end, and the method for seeding the generator will be announced on our Discord server:

<https://calico.berkeley.edu/discord>

Technical Details

Program Inputs & Outputs

Your program will take in input and output answers via the standard input channel (also known as the console). In problem descriptions, "standard input" is referred to as STDIN, and likewise "standard output" with STDOUT.

- C: Use `scanf(...)` and `printf(...)` to read input from STDIN and output to STDOUT, respectively.
- C++: Use `cin` and `cout` to read input from STDIN and output to STDOUT, respectively.
- Java: Use the `BufferedReader` class (imported with `java.lang.BufferedReader`) and `System.out.println(...)` to read input from STDIN and output to STDOUT, respectively.
- Python3: Use `input()` and `print(...)` to read input from STDIN and output to STDOUT, respectively.

For more descriptive and specific examples of handling input and outputs in each language, check out the templates written for some problems on our Problem Bank. The contest itself will also have templates available for some problems, written in a similar style. You can also always view the solutions to problems on the Problem Bank.

Misc. Technical Details

Submissions should be deterministic in nature. In other words, they should always give the same output when given the same input. We periodically rejudge submissions during and after the contest, so it's important that your solutions are consistent. If a program that received an accepted verdict fails on the rejudge, you will retroactively lose points. You may still use random-number elements in your solution, but they should make use of a fixed seed.

Depending on the problem, it may not be guaranteed that integers will fit within standard 32-bit integer types. If larger data types are required (such as 64-bit integers), we often make a note of this in the problem description. However, it is ultimately your responsibility to realize when these are needed.

We reserve the right to increase time limits or add/remove test cases during the contest to produce more accurate autograder feedback.

All judging decisions are **final**.

Preparing for the Contest

Here's a list of things you must do/check before the contest:

- ☐ Check that you've **received the autograder account credentials** after the registration deadline (and after the announcement has been posted on the website).
- ☐ **Set up your programming environment**, making sure you've installed the approved languages you want to use. You should also have either an IDE or text editor set up as well.

Here's a list of things that we recommend you do, if you'd like:

- ☐ **Solve problems on our Problem Bank** to familiarize yourself with the formatting of problems, as well as the autograder interface.
- ☐ **Form a strategy to compete.** There are a lot of questions spanning a wide range of difficulties; coming up with a strategy to choose/solve problems can work wonders for overall performance!
- ☐ **Create a template for programs.** We already provide templates for some problems on the contest, but you're free to use your own!
- ☐ **Create a reference sheet** to use during the contest, reminding yourself of syntax, libraries, and (some suggestions: rounding decimals to a set number of digits, sorting strings alphabetically, etc.). We generally avoid problems that involve obscure/menial tasks like those, so a reference sheet is certainly not required.

More Resources

Would you like to compete in more contests like this, or simply get more experience with competitive programming? Check out these other contests & resources to polish your programming skills:

- **USACO (USA Computing Olympiad)**: an annual online high-school programming contest, with an online training portal available!
- **Lockheed Martin's Code Quest**: an annual high-school programming contest that inspired the creation of CALICO!
- **ProCo**: an annual high-school programming contest run at Stanford.
- **Facebook (Meta) Hacker Cup**: an annual programming contest run by Facebook, with multiple rounds you need to qualify into.
- **Croatian Open Competition in Informatics**: a monthly online high-school contest run by the Croatian Association of Informatics.
- **LeetCode**: online library of programming problems covering a large range of algorithmic concepts, with weekly contests.
- **Codeforces**: online library of programming problems covering a large range of algorithmic concepts, with frequent contests.
- **CodeChef**: online library of programming problems covering a large range of algorithmic concepts, with frequent contests.
- **Project Euler**: online library of programming problems centered around math-based problems.