What everybody should know about the TI-85/86

Written by Jeff O’Connell – joconnell@ohlone.edu
Ohlone College
http://www2.ohlone.edu/people2/joconnell/ti/

For general information like how the TI-85 or 86 compares to other calculators, software downloads, the TI-85 and 86 guidebooks, and information that can be found on the Texas Instruments web site about the TI-85 and 86, please check http://www2.ohlone.edu/people2/joconnell/ti/comparison.html

ANS – This is a short term memory, it stores the last result. You can then use it on the next line by pressing 2nd [ANS].

Battery information – The TI-85/86 uses both 4 AAA alkaline batteries and a lithium battery for back-up. The lithium battery is only used to store information when the AAA batteries are being changed. Batteries should be changed when you start to see the screen dim while the calculator is computing, graphing for example. If you find yourself needing to darken the contrast to 7 just to see the screen, then it is time to change the batteries. When the batteries are changed the contrast is reset to 0 so you will not see anything when you turn it on. Darken the contrast as described below.

Catalog – A complete list of the TI-85/86’s functions can be found by pressing 2nd [Catalog]. For details on what each function does refer to Page A2 in the TI-85 guidebook and chapter 20 in the TI-86 guidebook.

Conversions – The TI-85/86 will convert from one set of units to another. Say you wanted to know how what 3 ft² converts to in m²: Enter 3 and press 2nd [CONV] (above 5), select [AREA] and choose ft² followed by m² (the screen should show 3 ft² ÷ m²) press ENTER to get .27870912 m².

Custom Menus – One of my favorite features of the TI-85/86 is the custom menu. If there are functions that you use often you can put them all in one place using the custom menu. Press 2nd [Catalog], select [CUSTM] from the menu. Now scroll through the catalog to the function that you want to use. Once the arrow is next to the function press the menu button you want to store it under. You can store up to 15 functions in the custom menu.

Darken/Lighten Screen Contrast – To adjust the contrast on the screen press 2nd and [△] or [∇]

Entry – After a long line of computation you may find that you have made an entry mistake or maybe the next line of computation is very similar to the first. Pressing 2nd [ENTRY] will produce the last line that you entered and you can edit it as necessary.

Fractions – After a computation you can convert the result to a fraction by pressing 2nd [MATH], selecting [MISC], pressing [MORE], selecting [÷ FRAC] and pressing ENTER. This same procedure will also convert entries in vectors and matrices to fractions. Because this command is “buried” under a lot of menus, I put this command in my CUSTOM menu.

Quit – You can always get back to the home screen by pressing 2nd [QUIT].

Storing – To store a result (number, vector, matrix, etc) after it has been entered press STO> and enter the variable you wish to use.

Variables – Variables can be more than 1 letter long. Be careful!! If you have 3 stored in A and 4 stored in B then AB is not 12, it is the variable AB, A*B is 12.

(-) vs – – The [(-)] button found at the bottom of the calculator is a negative sign, the [ ] button above the [+] button is a subtraction sign. While there isn’t much difference in your Mathematics course, if you want to do a computation like −2 − 5 it must be entered [(-)] 2 [−] 5.

Errors – When the TI-85/86 gives an error, it lets you know what kind of error it found. This can be very helpful when things are not working right. A complete list of the errors along with a description of each can be found in the TI-85 guidebook on Page B4 and on page 393 of the TI-86 guidebook.