

## Grading Guidelines for High School Credit

One of the areas that a lot of homeschooling parents have questions about is grading—how to properly evaluate their child's work. Grading becomes even more important during the high school years, since the documentation of high school-level work includes keeping track of final grades in courses that are taken. Final grades are then recorded on the child's high school transcript.

Grades are subjective any way you look at them—and more often than not, grading is an art and not an exact science. Even public and private schools will differ in the manner in which grades are awarded—a student receiving an A in one school may not mean that the same mastery and effort were attained as another student receiving an A in a different school. But don't let the subjectivity of grades deter you from doing your best to evaluate your child's knowledge and skill in any given subject area.

First of all, realize that grades are important feedback for your child. After you've completed a job or task it's reasonable to ask, "How did I do?" Taking the time to give tests and then grade your child's work serves as motivation for him to take his studies seriously, and then have the pleasure of either rejoicing in a skill or paper that is well done, or getting a "wake-up call" in an area that may need additional study.

Some subjects lend themselves easily to calculating grades. For example, math, science, and foreign language courses usually can be evaluated in objective terms and most answers to these test questions are right or wrong—black or white. In these subjects, simply divide the number of correct answers by the total number of problems on the test to come up with a straight percentage score that can easily be converted into a letter grade based on the scale that you've chosen. A calculator can be used to convert the test scores into percentages, or you can pick up an inexpensive teacher's percentage grading scale at the local educational store that converts the scores to percentages for you.

Other subjects, like English composition, history, and electives, pose a bit more of a challenge when evaluating, but here are some general guidelines. Decide ahead of time what will determine the grade. In an English composition course, you may want to break down a paper grade as follows: Content—60%, Grammar/Mechanics—30%, Effort—10%. It is a good idea to let your child know ahead of time how a paper will be evaluated—it helps him to pay close attention to detail if he knows that points will be taken off for mistakes in grammar, punctuation, etc. It also helps to know that "what" he has to say, i.e. the content, is the most important aspect of the paper and is weighted the most heavily. Unit tests, midterms, and final exams can be weighted more heavily than a chapter test or weekly quiz. The parent can determine the weight that each will be given and calculate the final grade with these percentages.

Likewise, in a history course, let your child know ahead of time that 50% of the test will be multiple-choice, 25% short-answer, and the last 25% an essay. This will help your child to study and understand that he will not only be responsible for recalling facts and figures, but will also need to grasp the big picture and be able to communicate his understanding of the historical time period in essay form.

It is reasonable and acceptable for your child's final grade to include a small component for completing daily assignments, in addition to scores on quizzes and tests. Be careful to not "over-reward" the daily assignments such as reading, taking notes, completing practice homework, and preparation for discussion with you. As an

example, in an English lit class you may determine that your child's reading, note taking, and being prepared to discuss the assigned text with you might be worth 25% of his final grade in the course. Make your child work diligently for this; don't just hand it to him as a free 25% of his grade, but use it as an incentive for him to take his independent reading, daily assignments, preparation for discussion, and note taking seriously.

And by all means, let your student know that late or incomplete work is unacceptable. It is reasonable to deduct points from his final score for failing to turn in an assignment or paper on time. Remember that you are teaching more than academics—you are training your child in time management and in the necessity of sticking to a schedule in order to meet a deadline.

In general, when coming up with a final grade, determine at the beginning of the course what percentage each category of a grade will receive. You will then use the individual scores for each category and take a weighted average using the percentages that you have assigned. Shown below are sample grade calculations for an algebra course and an English course.

Letter grades are suitable for core academic subjects such as English, history, science, math, and foreign language. For elective courses that don't lend themselves to testing, quizzes, papers, etc., you may simply want to give your child a pass/fail grade based on his attainment of the goals you set for the course. Pass/fail grades are not calculated into a grade point average.

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### Example 1

Course: Algebra 1

Method of Evaluation: Tests—**80%**; Daily Assignments—**20%**

Test scores: 85, 89, 92, 77

Average of test scores:  $85 + 89 + 92 + 77 = 343 / 4 \text{ tests} = \mathbf{85.75\%}$

Daily Assignments: 25 out of 27 daily assignments completed

Overall daily assignment score:  $25/27 = \mathbf{92.59\%}$

Now, average the test scores and the daily assignment scores by the weights given above:

Tests (85.75%) weighted by 80%:  $85.75 \times 0.8 = \mathbf{68.60}$

Daily assignments (92.59%) weighted by 20%:  $92.59 \times 0.2 = \mathbf{18.52}$

Grade:  $68.60 + 18.52 = \mathbf{87.12\%}$

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## Example 2

Course: English Lit and Composition

Method of Evaluation: Papers—60 % (Components: Content—60%, Grammar—30%, Effort—10%);

Tests—40 %

Paper grades:

Paper #1

- Content—56 out of 60

- Grammar—30 out of 30

- Effort—5 out of 10

Total: **91%**

Paper #2

- Content—52 out of 60

- Grammar—25 out of 30

- Effort—7 out of 10

Total: **84 %**

Paper #3

- Content—51 out of 60

- Grammar—29 out of 30

- Effort—6 out of 10

Total: **86%**

Average of paper grades:  $91 + 84 + 86 = 261/3 = 87\%$

Test scores: 90, 75, 88, 85

Average of test scores:  $90 + 75 + 88 + 85 = 338/4 = 84.5\%$

Now, take a weighted average: Papers:  $87 \times 0.6 = 52.2$

Tests:  $84.5 \times 0.4 = 33.8$

Grade:  $52.2 + 33.8 = 86\%$