

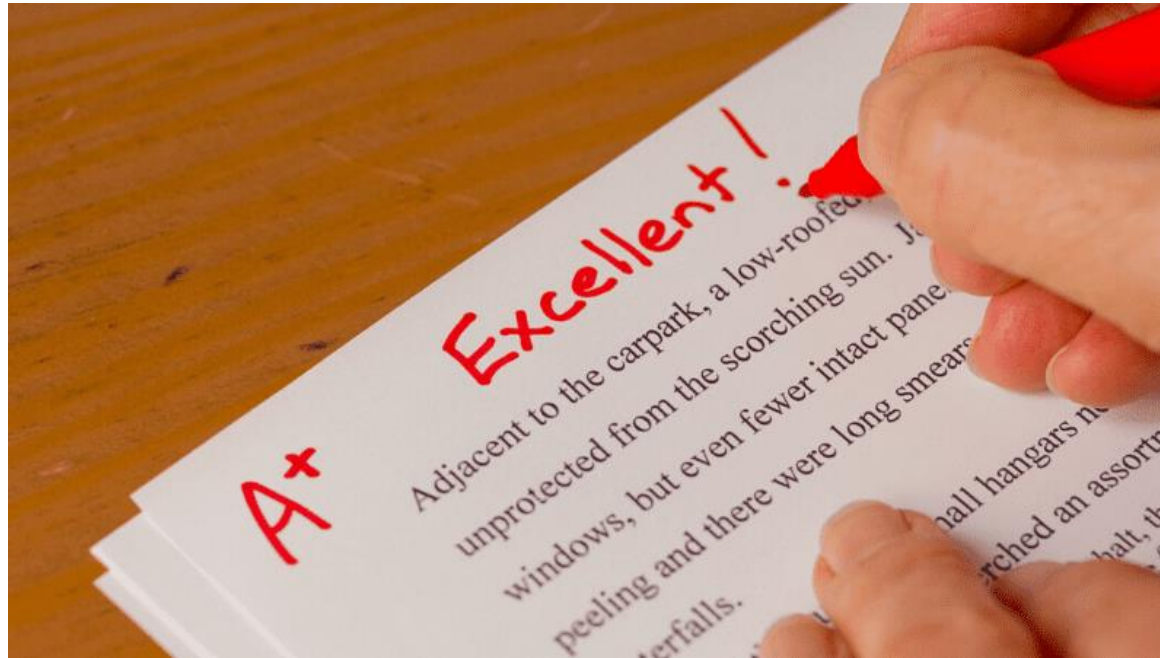


How to “Ungrade” for Improved Student Learning (and Reduced Instructor Stress)

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What is/are your biggest grading challenge(s)?



Students, write a response!

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Do not remove this bar



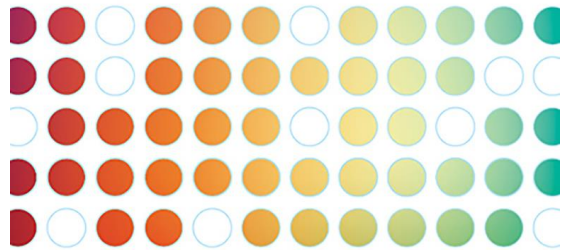


The problem with grading

- + One-size-fits-all uniformity
- + Doesn't tell the whole story
- + Doesn't motivate **learning**
- + Teaches students to "game the system"
- + May squelch creativity and risk-taking

UNgrading

Why Rating Students
Undermines Learning
(and What to Do
Instead)

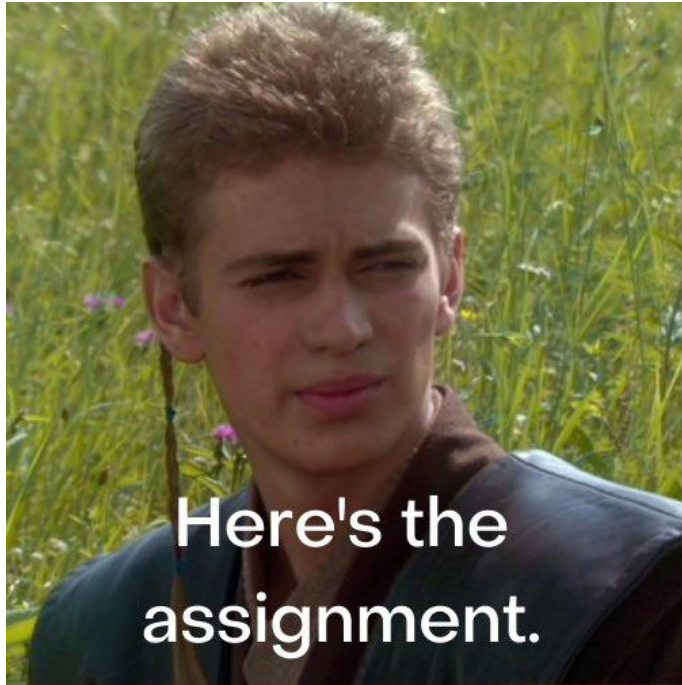


EDITED BY

Susan D. Blum

With a foreword by Alfie Kohn

What is “ungrading?”



Here's the assignment.



How many points is it worth?



Ungrading is

Feedback

Student
agency

Internal
motivation

Risky

Rewarding

Fun

Focused on
process, not
just product

...time
consuming?

Ungrading is not

Static

Ideal for all courses

Grade inflation

Lack of rigor

An absence of feedback

Controlling

A close-up photograph of a blue ribbon award. The ribbon is gathered into a circular shape on the right side, featuring a gold laurel wreath emblem. The background is a dark, gradient surface.

**Why should I consider
ungrading?**



So...what does ungrading look like?

- + Feedback versus points and letter grades
- + Formative and summative assessment
- + Personalized
- + Reflection and self-evaluation
- + Opportunities to improve

What do students think?



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Please suggest a grade for yourself, with supportive comments. As in #3, don't think of "averaging" each assignment. Rather think of where you were on June 16 and where you are now in terms of your cleft knowledge.

Grade: A-

Rationale: I think I have grown so much because we covered every aspect that we learned more about the psychosocial aspects of cleft, establish goals for a client with a cleft, and more. I have grown in my ability to think outside of the box and look for small details that can contribute to something "big". Like looking for certain characteristics that coincide with a syndrome. Although I have succeeded in these aspects, I think there are some details I missed when completing assignments and the accuracy of my answers, and why I gave myself an A- versus an A. However, I was able to learn from these details missed or "mistakes" and this was in turn more beneficial in the long run.

I'm glad that you felt we hit the highpoints, And mistakes are always opportunities for learning...even if they don't feel great sometimes.

What have you learned about HOW you learn?

I've learned that I actually retain and understand a lot more than I give myself credit for. As we discussed in this last class, when I found myself just sitting and thinking as I completed a CSI I was able to come up with new ideas, recall information and connect to other ideas. It was fun and reassuring to be able to apply this information in real-world cases, as we are getting very close to becoming SLPs.

Did you learn something unexpected?

I did not expect to learn about so many different syndromes and how a cleft is often a strong characteristic of certain syndromes. However, this was so interesting to learn about and probably my favorite part of the class and loved the idea of being a "detective" during different CSI's and case studies.

What do you think you'll remember in five years?

I think what I will remember most in 5 years is how no kid with a cleft is the same, and we have to be a “detective” and really take apart and look at the pieces of the puzzle to find the diagnoses and solution.

Looking over all of your CSIs and in class assignments, as well as reflecting on your Kahoot accuracy, how did your learning evolve over this short semester? Did your accuracy improve, did you learn more, did you approach problems differently? Describe your growth trajectory.

My learning evolved from being strictly about rote memorizing information, to really getting into the information being presented and attempting to “solve the puzzle,” and critically think and analyze what was going on. This method helped me use the information that I learned and not just “memorize it for now” and then forget it later, but through applying and understanding it provided me with a deeper learning experience and helped me to answer questions, in both Kahoot and in the CSI's, with more accuracy and deeper understanding.

I think my learning evolved greatly throughout this semester. I did okay on the first Kahoot and even with some of the questions on the pre-test but just comparing CSI 1 to CSI 2, I saw a great amount of growth in my thought process and approach to cases. I learned what questions to ask and how to conceptualize a case to come to a sound decision and rationale for my approaches. This is something that I don't think I was very good at coming into this class and I know that it will carry over to other classes and situations in the future. I not only saw my approach evolve, but my accuracy improved with it because I was looking at the whole picture and thinking about how every dot connected. I really enjoyed the discussion today about just sitting down and thinking. This is an aspect of myself that I need to be better at. If I learn to slow down and think about every piece of the puzzle, I will grow even more as a learner, a person, and as a clinician.

Think about your initial reaction to the lack of focus on grades...how do you feel about it now?

I think this was one of the most beneficial aspects of this class. Being able to reflect on what I had wrote (sic) on my pretest, CSI's and assignments was very eye opening and I was able to self-correct myself without the stress of getting a lower grade. I liked how the focus was about learning the material and being able to apply this information to future clients rather than a letter grade.

I enjoyed the initial reaction to the lack of focus on grades, but yet it made me feel very uneasy and unsure of what to expect and how to know if I am doing a "good job" and have the correct answer. Now, I feel that I feel much more interested in providing good insight, which is much more important than the correct answer. I still feel a little weary because I don't honestly know what grade I will get, but I have accepted that the knowledge that I gained and information that I have processed along with the problem-solving and inquisitive approach to learning is way more beneficial, in my opinion.

I feel like grading was somewhat the same. I like how we were more responsible for determining what we earned based on our knowledge and explanations. But I do like how we could advocate for ourself and be active in choosing our grade.

I like not having grades. It made me focus more on the learning process and the comments about pieces of information I needed to include in my answers in the future. If there were grades, I probably wouldn't have read the comments with as much detail and attention

My thoughts

Pros

- + Final reflections
- + Student learning trajectory
- + Student ownership and agency
- + Fun

Cons

- + Logistics of midterm and final conferences
- + Utility for content-heavy or introductory courses
- + Time/Energy

Want to learn more?

- + @jessifer
- + @AcademicBatgirl
- + @LindsayMasland
- + @grrrlmeetsworld
- + @GrubStreetWomen
- + #ungrading



Bibliography

Blum, Susan D. (2017, November 14). *Ungrading*. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2017/11/14/significant-learning-benefits-getting-rid-grades-essay>

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