



# Standards-Based Grading

If you want grades to reflect what students know and are able to do at a certain point in time, consider implementing standards-based grading in your classroom.

## Separate Non-Academic Skills

If grades are intended to convey what a student knows and is able to do, then it is fundamentally inaccurate to dilute that grade with non-academic related scores. Habits of work are important and should be evaluated, but measure things like participation in class, or meeting deadlines, separately and expect mastery in both content and habits of work.

## Eliminate Zeros on a 100-Point Scale

If a student has failed an assignment, meaning there is no evidence of learning, a 59 conveys failure just as much as a zero. The difference is that there is 60 points worth of failure to overcome from a zero, making it virtually impossible to recover from. With a 59, there is still hope, and hope is a necessary ingredient to maintaining motivation to learn.

## Ditch the 100-Point Scale

If you want to assess each student against each learning target, the last thing you need is 100 points of nuance and complexity. Opt for a 4-point rubric where 0 means there is no evidence of learning. 1 means there is some evidence of learning. 2 means a student is almost proficient at the learning target. 3 means the student is proficient, and 4 means the student is showing evidence beyond the learning target.

## Align Standards to Learning Targets

Make sure each assignment or test is aligned to specific learning targets. Then assess how each student is performing against each learning target. This means one test might actually have three grades if it addresses three different learning targets. The goal is to create a record of evidence for each student against each learning target.

## Self-Assessment Rubrics

To make grading more consistent, use rubrics with clear criteria for each learning target. Then ask students to assess their own performance against the rubric. They will often be more critical on themselves than you would have been and they learn to take ownership of their learning process.

**To see a Standards-Based Grading strategy in action, check out this Blue Apple project:**

## The Dirty Truth

Life on Earth is precious and precarious. Every day, more species go extinct as our world becomes more polluted. People are fighting to make a difference—but is it enough? Or should we look to the skies to save our species?

In this project, students learn about the importance of environmental protection, and about the wonders of Mars. They choose whether to support environmental protection or space exploration, and create a commercial to raise money for their cause.



To explore this project and others, visit [BlueAppleTeacher.org](http://BlueAppleTeacher.org)