

## How to Figure Out Your Current Grade in a Course

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**Step One:** Using the syllabus of your course as your reference, list all of the items in the course that will count towards your final course grade, along with the percentage of your final course grade that each one is worth. *For example:*

Graded Item	Portion of final course grade (as a percentage)
Short Paper	1
Logic Quiz	4
Quizzes	10
Paper 1	10
Paper 2	10
Paper 3	10
Class Participation	15
Midterm Exam	20
Final Exam	20

**Step Two:** Convert each percentage number into a decimal number by dividing each of them by 100. *For example:*

Graded Item	Portion of final course grade (as a percentage)	Portion of final course grade (as a decimal)
Short Paper	1	$1/100 = 0.01$
Logic Quiz	4	$4/100 = 0.04$
Quizzes	10	$10/100 = 0.1$
Paper 1	10	$10/100 = 0.1$
Paper 2	10	$10/100 = 0.1$
Paper 3	10	$10/100 = 0.1$
Class Participation	15	$15/100 = 0.15$
Midterm Exam	20	$20/100 = 0.2$
Final Exam	20	$20/100 = 0.2$

**Step Three:** For all of the items that have been graded so far in the course, list the grade that you earned for each. Make sure that every grade is expressed in terms its number out of of 100 percent, even if you have to convert some grades to get them into that form. *For example:*

Graded Item	Portion that it counts for the final course grade (as a percentage)	Portion that it counts for the final course grade (as a decimal)	My grade for it, expressed as a percentage (out of 100)
Short Paper	1	0.01	78
Logic Quiz	4	0.04	89
Quizzes	10	0.1	$17/20 = 0.85 \rightarrow 85$
Paper 1	10	0.1	
Paper 2	10	0.1	
Paper 3	10	0.1	
Class Participation	15	0.15	
Midterm Exam	20	0.2	
Final Exam	20	0.2	

**Step Four:** For each of the items that has been graded so far in the course, multiply the decimal number that says how much it is worth to your final course grade by your grade on that item. This gives you the number of points (out of 100) that each item will be contributing toward your final course grade. *For example:*

Graded Item	Portion that it counts for the final course grade (as a percentage)	Portion that it counts for the final course grade (as a decimal)	My grade for it, expressed as a percentage (out of 100)	Points (the percentage out of 100) that my grade on it earns for me toward my final course grade
Short Paper	1	0.01	78	$0.01 \times 78 = 0.78$
Logic Quiz	4	0.04	89	$0.04 \times 89 = 3.56$
Quizzes	10	0.1	85	$0.1 \times 85 = 8.5$
Paper 1	10	0.1		
Paper 2	10	0.1		
Paper 3	10	0.1		
Class Participation	15	0.15		
Midterm Exam	20	0.2		
Final Exam	20	0.2		

**Step Five:** Add up two totals for the items that have been graded so far. First, add up all of the numbers given as percentages that express how much each item counts toward your final course grade. By the way, this total is the same and the highest number of possible points (out of 100) that you could have earned toward your final grade so far. Second, add up all of the points that you have actually earned so far toward your final course grade. *For example:*

Graded Item	Portion that it counts for the final course grade (as a percentage)	Portion that it counts for the final course grade (as a decimal)	My grade for it, expressed as a percentage (out of 100)	Points (the percentage out of 100) that my grade on it earns for me toward my final course grade
Short Paper	1	0.01	78	0.78
Logic Quiz	4	0.04	89	3.56
Quizzes	10	0.1	85	8.5
<i>Totals</i>	<i>15 (possible)</i>			<i>12.06 (earned)</i>

**Step Six:** Divide the second total by the first. That is, divide the total points (out of 100) that you have earned toward your final course grade so far by the total possible points that you could have earned toward your final course grade so far. The result is your current grade in the course (out of 100), according to the assignments that have been graded so far:

$$\frac{\text{Total Earned Points}}{\text{Total Possible Points}} = \text{Current Grade out of 100} \rightarrow \frac{12.06}{15} = 85.6$$

**Some final thoughts:**

- Some of the times during the semester when it is especially helpful to be able to calculate your current grade in a course are the following:
  - when you get your midterm course grade (to understand what it means),
  - when deciding whether you should withdraw from a course or fight for your grade in it (to help you make that decision),
  - and right before final exams (to help you budget your effort while studying for each of your final exams).
- Sometimes you may have to ask your instructor about a grade (like class participation).
- Sometimes you may have to use your best estimate for a grade. (For example, if you get to drop your worst two quiz scores at the end of the semester, you might want to use your regular quiz average, without dropping any grades, when calculating your current course grade in the middle of the semester so that you get a conservative estimate.)
- If you don't mind doing the work of calculation (or if you know how to get the calculations done using a spreadsheet program), you can create different future scenarios based on your current grade. (For example, in order to see what final course grade you would get if you made Ds on every future assignment, you could put in 65s for all of them. For Cs, you could use 75s; for Bs, 85s; for As, 95s. Also, in order to see the highest possible final course grade that you could get in the future, use 100s for all future items.