

The Power of Zero: How to Avoid Low Grades

Starting around 5th or 6th grade, the rules change about mid-terms, report card grades and high school credits for graduation. Instead of being based primarily on what a student knows, suddenly grades are also based on what a student does, especially on what a student turns in on time. This change in the rules is not always explained or written down, but it is an important rule for students to know.

Students might think that some homework assignments are not important, especially if the teacher does not keep asking for the missing work. Students might think that if it was important, the teacher would “bug” them to turn in those assignments. However, most teachers do count all assignments for the final grade. If the teacher is not bugging you to turn something in, it still probably counts. If it is not turned in, it will probably be listed as a zero in the teacher’s grade book.

When students have several different classes and teachers, they have to learn how to keep all their books and papers organized. Sometimes, they really did their homework, but they can’t find it to turn it in. Even though the student learned the information by doing his assignment, it is not just having the knowledge that counts. If the homework is not turned in, it will be listed as a zero in the teacher’s grade book.

Sometimes, a student is really good at a subject and gets good grades on the tests. He might think that the homework assignments are not important because he already knows this stuff and he knows he will get an “A” on the test. However, grades are based on homework as well as tests, so homework that is not turned in will count as a zero in the teacher’s grade book.

A student might be confused about how to complete an assignment, but not ask for help. If he doesn’t know how to do it, he might just ignore it and not turn in anything at all. By not asking for help, maybe no one in class will realize that he doesn’t understand. However, if it is not turned in, it will be listed as a zero in the teacher’s grade book.

As students get older, there are more long-term projects to do. These require the student to plan ahead or else she will be trying to do the whole thing on the last possible night. Students who put off getting started on big projects sometimes get frustrated and end up turning in nothing. If nothing is turned in, the project will be listed as a zero in the teacher’s grade book.

Here is an example about two students in the same class. All of their daily grades were exactly the same, but Student #2 passed with a “C,” while Student #1 failed! How did that happen?!

The only difference between getting an “F” and getting an “C” for these students was that Student #1 had 3 assignments with ZERO points! Student #2 had failed the same 3 assignments, but he did not have ZEROES for them. Perhaps he had not completed his homework for those three, or maybe he just didn’t understand it. Still, he turned in all of his assignments and had at least some points correct. A “high F” grade is better than an “F” due to a ZERO.

Assignment	Total Possible Points (A+)	Points needed for a “C-”	Student #1’s points & grades	Student #2’s points & grades
Homework	10	7	10 = A	10 = A
Homework	25	18	24 = A	24 = A
Homework	20	14	14 = C	14 = C
Quiz	30	21	24 = B	24 = B
Homework	20	14	0 = F	12 = F
Homework	20	14	0 = F	12 = F
Quiz	30	21	18 = D	18 = D
Homework	15	11	12 = B-	12 = B-
Homework	25	18	23 = A-	23 = A
Project	65	46	0 = F	38 = F
Homework	20	14	18 = B	18 = B
Test	100	70	83 = B	83 = B
Homework	10	7	9 = B+	9 = B+
Homework	25	18	25 = A	25 = A
Total Points	435	305	260 = F	322 = C
Final Grade	A+	C-	F	C

A smart student knows that if a teacher gives an assignment, it must be completed and turned in on time. It is important to ask someone for help if you do not understand how to do an assignment. It is important to ask someone to help you get organized so you don’t lose assignments.

Who can you ask for help?

Remember the power of ZERO. Don’t let it have any power over you!