

A Few Tips for Using Blackboard Gradebook

Throw away your little red grade book and move to a better system! By using the Blackboard Gradebook feature, instructors can access their gradebook from any computer with Internet. In addition, students have 24/7 access to view their assignment grades compared to the class average and even their “running grade” in the course. This helps transfer some of the responsibility of correct grading from the instructor to the student, who can catch any errors or omissions.

1 – Getting Started

- Go to Control Panel>Blackboard. Your students will be there, waiting for you to add assignments.

2 – Using Gradebook settings

- The spreadsheet settings allow you to change how you see the students’ names—last name first or first name first, user name or student ID.
- Adding gradebook categories. This will gain importance if you are weighting grades—make sure that the categories that you need are already in the system or add what you need
- Manage display options lets you decide how many points constitute a particular grade, such as 90-100=A or 97-100=A+.

3 – Adding Items

- Name of the assignment—keep it short to keep your gradebook display compact. You can add a description to clarify the assignment
- Category –Choose among the options. This is quite important if you are weighting grades. If a correct breakdown of categories is not available, go back to the Gradebook Settings and add it. You may also choose “other” if you are not weighting grades.
- Description – allows you to add more detail about the assignment
- Date—This is generally the assignment due date
- Points possible—Decide on the number of possible points for the assignment. Your decisions may make an automatic weighting of the grades.
- Score—with the dropdown menu, you may select the default Score or Complete/Incomplete , Letter, Percentage or Text.
- Visible to students/points included in Gradebook. This is defaulted to “Yes.” If you do not want the grades visible to student or if you do not want these points included in gradebook, make sure to check no.

4 – Manage Items—The Manage items feature allows you to change the order of appearance, add, remove or modify items. Using this few means fewer clicks of the mouse.

5 – Add Grades—Click on the item and then click on Item Grade List. Enter your grades and click Submit. The students will immediately be able to see their grade, the possible points for the assignment and the class average.

6 – Weight grades—You may weight your grades several ways in Blackboard, including just by assigning points (if the final is worth half of the grade of a class, assign it half of the point total in the class) or by using the Weight Grades feature. Grades may be weighted either by Category or Item. When you use weights in your course, let your learners know that the Weighted Total Column displays their final course grades. You might want to make the Weighted Total Column unavailable to learners until the end of the semester.

- **Category**—If you weight by category, it is imperative that each assignment has the correct category. Make sure that this totals 100% or you will get a warning from Gradebook. As you add new items, the percentage of the weight is automatically redivided.
- **Item**—If you do not have many items, this may work just as well as Category.
- Be aware that once you weight your grades, you cannot go back to unweighted.

7 – Running Total or Running Weighted Total—You may display these as points (default) or letter or percentage.

8 – Download and Upload grades

- To download grades, click on Download Grades and choose between the comma separated values (CSV) or tab. If you use the comma feature, it will be easier to download as excel spreadsheet as CSV and bring into Excel. The default is gb_export, so you may want to change this to a name that has more meaning for you. You may make whatever changes you need to do and then:
- To upload grades, click on Upload Grades and browse files. You will be offered a choice of the columns to upload and what columns to replace.

9 – Sort

- Sort your spreadsheet by grades within an assignment by clicking on the small arrow above the column. The default order is by last name, but you can sort by assignment grades. When you press the button the lowest grade is on top and the highest grade on bottom. The tiny arrow will now turn orange.
- You can sort the way the gradebook items appear by: title, weight, category, date added, date, points possible or position. The last is the way the items appear under Manage Items. You must decide press the go button to sort.

10 – Filter

Filtering allows you to see only part of your gradebook.

- Filter by category and only look at a particular category, such as tests, attendance, homework or assignments
- Filter by student name and see only the part of the gradebook with those letters. This can be a benefit for very large classes.

Notes