

How to Improve Your Grades in a Class You're Failing

Are you in danger of failing an important class? If so, I have a plan to help you.

During my years as an academic tutor, I was sometimes called into crisis situations. I met children struggling with junior-high math and college students struggling with calculus. I met children terrified they would be held back and adults juggling full-time jobs, parenthood, and loaded college schedules who could not afford to fail. I helped every single one of these people pass their courses.

Below is the step-by-step approach I used.

Step One: Determine Your Target Grade

Your target grade is the average grade you must earn on assignments from this point forward to pass the class. It's just that simple. If one of your assignments earns less than the target grade, you are on the wrong track, my friend, and you will need to step it up. So the target grade helps you set a concrete goal for each assignment and track your progress. Before you can reach your destination, you have to know where you're going. So let's go!

If you are confident in your ability to calculate the target grade on your own, you can skip the example below. Just keep in mind, your target grade may need to be adjusted periodically.

Example of Calculating a Target Grade

Tommy has a class that is worth a total of 1,000 points. To pass the class, he needs to earn 70%, otherwise expressed as 700 ($1,000 \times .7$) points. So how does Tommy figure out how well he must perform from this point forward? First, he needs to know how many points he has earned so far. So Tommy digs through his old papers and figures out that, so far, he has earned a total of 400 points. In other words, he has 400 points today, and he will need 300 more points to earn the 700 required. Now he needs to know how many points are still available in the class. A quick glance at the syllabus tells him that the remaining assignments are worth 350 points. Tommy whips out his calculator, divides the points he needs by the points remaining in the class ($300/350$) and comes up with .857, which he rounds up to 86 percent. Tommy will need to earn an average of 86% on assignments from this point forward if he wants to pass this class!

If you cannot calculate your target grade yourself, please ask your teacher to help you. Don't be shy. Good teachers will interpret your interest as a sign of motivation. If you are

a parent acting on your child's behalf, any teacher worth his or her salt will correctly interpret your involvement as a good thing; believe me.

Step Two: Remediate Past Mistakes

Do you have what it takes to earn the target grade? I firmly believe any student can earn very good grades. But what if your target grade is 105 percent? Even Einstein couldn't do that! Whether your target grade seems unattainable or easy, remediating past mistakes may be your easiest solution:

- Ask the teacher if you can make up missed assignments. Even if a penalty is assessed, every point will help.
- Ask the teacher if you can do extra-credit work. In my experience, this option is less likely in college than in grade school, but it never hurts to ask!

Then, make sure you do every assignment and study for every test from this point forward.

Step Three: Determine the Source of Points and Strategize Accordingly

Some classes focus on tests, others on take-home assignments. Which kind of class is yours? And more importantly, where are most of your points coming from between now and the last day of class? If most of the points are coming from take-home assignments, do these to the best of your ability, follow instructions carefully, and make sure you understand how each will be graded.

If the bulk of your remaining points are coming from tests, make sure your study skills are top notch. There are two kinds of tests, each with unique recommendations: Memorization and Application.

Memorization Tests

Memorization tests require you to memorize dates, names, places, and other facts.

[Memorization](#) is my forte. In college, I decided to push myself to see just how much I could memorize. So how much was it? I memorized every single word in 7 entire chapters of my psychology textbook. That was over 23,000 words, memorized in order. Yes, I could actually recite the entire 7 chapters to anyone willing to listen. Read my [memory article](#) for more details.

Your goal is to find a memory technique that works for you, whether it's mine, someone else's, or your own.

Application Tests

Some tests, math in particular, involve application of skills. For this type of test, practice makes perfect. Remember, if you can't solve a particular type of equation prior to the test, you won't be able to solve it on the test either.

If you need help, ask for it. Does your school have a free lab or mentored study area? Will your teacher or a family member help you? Investigate all your options.

By determining your target grade, remediating past mistakes, and strategizing for the future, you give yourself a fighting chance to pass this class.

<http://johnplaceonline.com/study-smarter/how-to-improve-your-grades-in-a-class-you-are-failing/>