



# Ungrading

## Quick-start Sources

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Obviously I recommend our [Ungrading](#) book, where fifteen of us have developed arguments, provided research, and offered experience from both K12 and higher education, in humanities, social science, and STEM. But here are a few places to start. I've added links where possible.

In addition to these sources, there are many podcasts about ungrading; posted lectures; Twitter groups (including an open virtual book club organized by David Buck); and articles in the Chronicle of Higher Education and Inside Higher Ed. Each of these has additional sources.

## The foundational work by Alfie Kohn on the negative effects of grades

- Kohn, Alfie. 1999. [From Degrading to De-Grading](#)

- Kohn, Alfie. 2011. [The Case Against Grades](#). Educational Leadership. November. Kohn, Alfie. 2018 [1993]. Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

## The history of grades and why grading on a curve is problematic

- Bowen, Ryan S., and Melanie M. Cooper. 2022. Grading on a Curve as a Systemic Issue of Equity in Chemistry Education. *Journal of Chemical Education* 99 (1), 185-194. DOI: 10.1021/acs.jchemed.1c00369
- Cooper, Melanie M., and Mike Klymkowsky. 2020. Curbing the malpractice of curved grades and high-stakes exams. *ASBMB Today*. THE MEMBER MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY Nov. 18, 2020. <https://www.asbmb.org/asbmb-today/opinions/111820/curbing-the-e-malpractice-of-curved-grades-and-high>
- Rosales, John, and Tim Walker. 2021. The Racist Beginnings of Standardized Testing. *NEA Today*. March 20. <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/racist-beginnings-standardized-testing>
- Schinske, Jeffrey, and Kimberly Tanner. 2014. [Teaching More by Grading Less \(or Differently\)](#). *CBE--Life Sciences Education* 13: 159-166. <https://www.lifescied.org/doi/10.1187/cbe.cbe-14-03-0054>

## On intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

- Ryan, Richard M., and Edward L. Deci. 2000. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25: 54-67.
- Deci, Edward L. 1971. Effects of Externally Mediated Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 18:105-115.
- Pink, Daniel H. 2009. [Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us](#). New York: Riverhead Books.
- Pink, Dan. 2009. [The Puzzle of Motivation](#). TED Talk. TED Global.

# Labor-based and contract grading

- Inoue, Asao B. (2019). [Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom](#). University Press of Colorado and WAC Clearinghouse.
- Inoue, Asao. [Workshop Handout - Labor-Based Grading Contracts](#)
- Davidson, Cathy N., and Christina Katopodis. [Getting Started 6: Contract Grading and Peer Review](#)

# Specifications/ specs grading

- Nilson, Linda B. 2014. [Specifications Grading: Restoring Rigor, Motivating Students, and Saving Faculty Time](#). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

# Stommel on his decades of ungrading

- Stommel, Jesse. [Ungrading: an FAQ](#)

# On students disregarding feedback when there are grades

- Butler, Ruth. 1987. Task-Involving and Ego-Involving Properties of Evaluation: Effects of Different Feedback Conditions on Motivational Perceptions, Interest, and Performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 79 (4): 474-482.
- Butler, Ruth. 1988. Enhancing and Undermining Intrinsic Motivation: The effects of Task-involving and Ego-involving Evaluation on Interest and Performance. *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 58(1): 1-14.

## On equity

- Feldman, Joe. 2019. [Grading for Equity: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms](#). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

## On inconsistency and unreliability of grades

- Starch, Daniel, and Edward C. Elliott. 1912. Reliability of the Grading of High School Work in English. *School Review* 20: 442-57.
- Starch, Daniel, and Edward C. Elliott. 1913a. Reliability of Grading Work in History. *School Review* 21: 676-81.
- Starch, Daniel, and Edward C. Elliott. 1913b. Reliability of Grading Work in Mathematics. *School Review* 21: 254-95.
- Stevenson, Dean. 2019. A, B, C, D, and F: [Meaningful Grades or Random Letters?](#) Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics conference, September 25-27, Boston, MA.

## On brief conferences with students

- Sackstein, Starr. 2022. [Hacking Assessment 2nd Edition](#). Cleveland, OH: Times 10 Publications.

## On transforming science education

- Wieman, Carl. 2017. [Improving How Universities Teach Science: Lessons from the Science Education Initiative](#). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

## Nothing has changed

- Kirschenbaum, Howard, Sidney B. Simon, and Rodney W. Napier, with Barry Fishman. 2021 [1971]. *Wad-ja-get? The Grading Game in American Education*. New York: Hart Publishing Co. New 50th anniversary open

access [edition](#)

## Quotations - Sources

- hooks, bell. 1994. [Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom](#). New York: Routledge.
- Paradise, Ruth. 1998. [What's Different about Learning in Schools as Compared to Family and Community Settings?](#) Human Development 41:270-278. DOI: 10.1159/000022587.
- Noddings, Nel. 2003. [Happiness and Education](#). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Some recent podcasts, meetings, and articles on ungrading:

- Beyond the Curriculum Podcast, [Season 2: UNgrading](#), 2021, 6 episodes
- Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Episode 350, Susan D Blum, [Ungrading](#), February 25, 2021
- Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Episode 217, [How to Ungrade](#), Jesse Stommel, August 9, 2018
- Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Episode 209, [Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies](#), Asao Inoue. June 14, 2018.
- Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Episode 142, [Rethinking Assessment \(and Other Reflections on the Lilly Conference\)](#), Josh Eyler. March 2, 2017.
- Human Restoration Project, Episode 83: [Why Rating Students Undermines learning w Dr. Susan Blum](#), December 5, 2020
- Tea for Teaching podcast: Pedagogies of Care: Ungrading, [Susan Blum](#). July 22, 2020
- [Why Pedagogy is an Anthropological Problem](#)
- [The Controversial but Useful Practice of "Ungrading" in Teaching Writing](#)
- [Ungrading in Schools \(w/ Susan Blum and Kevin Currie-Knight\)](#)
- [improving learning in higher education](#)
- [CoLab Podcast: Ungrading with Dr. Susan Blum](#)