

EXCELSIOR GRADE PROGRAM

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This is a brief overview of how I use my program for keeping my grades.

To set up a new class, go to “FILE”, then “NEW”.

This will give you a blank slate to start with. It is now your choice of how to set up your program and grading methods. I like to give points for different assignments then total all the points at the end of the grading period and average them with the points possible. I also weight my grades. Homework and lab grades are worth 25% each of the total grade. Miscellaneous (classwork, etc.) is 20% and tests are 30% of the total grade.

In order to set up the program to fit my needs, here's where I start once I have a new, blank file.

I need to define what the different categories or groupings are and how I want them to grade assignments that are put into them. ---I need to pause. Before I do that, let me tell you the hierarchy for the groupings and show you how to put in terms you will be able to understand.

The largest group is the SUBJECT (I usually put the class name/type, eg. “science”). The next largest is the INTERVAL (here I use “semester”). After that it is the PERIOD (which I call “nine weeks” or “grading period” -- something to that effect). These are the main terms used for navigating the different levels of the grade program. There are other terms you might like to change to something more familiar. To do this, go to “**OPTIONS**”, then “**YOUR TERMS...**” This will bring up a screen that shows all of the terms used in the program and gives you the option to change them to ones that you will be more comfortable with. (I mentioned earlier what mine are.) Once you have put in terms you recognize, it will be easier to get around and understand how the program works.

Now, to define the different groups, categories, etc. Let's start with the smallest grouping, the Period (or Nine Weeks, as I'll call it).

Go to “**DEFINE**”, then “**NINE WEEKS...**”

This will give you a screen that probably says “1. UNTITLED” You want to EDIT this untitled period -- hit Edit.

Now you are asked to modify the Description of this period. Here is where you put in what you want your nine weeks (or period) to be called. I labeled it “First Nine Weeks”. You will also be asked about the “Method of

grading” you want to use and the “Letter grade BP’s” (letter grade breakpoints -- where each letter grade stops and starts).

You have several choices for your grading method, depending on how you figure the report card grade for each nine week grading period. I use averaging. Check the additional sheet to help you determine what method will best mirror your own grading style. The letter grade breakpoints also give you several choices. I use the multi-level breakpoints because it allows me to give + and - grades. I discuss how to modify the breakpoints to your specifications and uses later. Right now, choose which one you normally use, then hit **OK**.

You now can define the next largest grouping, the Interval (or semester). Again, go to “**DEFINE**”, then “**SEMESTERS...**” You will probably see a box that says “1. UNTITLED”. You want to edit this also, so hit **Edit**. As with the nine weeks (or period), you are asked for the Description of the interval. I labeled mine “First Semester”. You also need to choose the “Method of Grading” - how you would figure their semester grades (I average again) - and the “Letter Grade BP’s” (I use Multilevel Breakpoints for all my grades). Once you have these parameters to your liking, hit **OK**.

The largest group to define is the Subject. This will allow you to figure your year grade. Go to “**DEFINE**”, then whatever you named the subject (mine is “**SCIENCE...**”) Once again, you will get a screen that says “1.

UNTITLED”, and Edit this option. Enter the Description for this class. I use the different class names. I find I have to make 5 different files for 5 different classes to keep the records straight. My classes are named by the colors of the rainbow, so my first class would be Red, and I put this in the Description. Again, choose the “Method of Grading” you would use to determine the grade for the entire year and the “Letter Grade BP’s” you use at the end of the year (if you use straight grades, curve them, have + and - grades, etc.). Then hit **OK**.

At this point, I will suggest that you complete the basic setup by saving the file (so you don’t lose all this work!). To do this, go to “**FILE**”, then “**SAVE AS...**”

Under the “File Name”, type in what you would like to name this file. I keep one file for each class and name them accordingly. This, then, would be the RED file (because it is for the Red hour). I also put a number in front of the name (1-5) to keep them listed in the original class order and not alphabetical. For example, the original order will be red, orange, green, blue, and purple. To keep them listed in that order, I save them as 1-red, 2-orange, 3-green, 4-blue, and 5-purple. If you hadn’t noticed by now, this completes

your list on the blue bar at the top of your screen. By reading left to right, it tells you exactly where you are in the program. Mine (at this point) reads like this:

RED:RED/First Semester/First nine weeks

This tells me that I am in the Red file, the first semester and the first grading period. In order to create a file for the entire year, you need to go back and define the Second, Third, and Fourth nine weeks along with the Second grading period in the same manner that you defined the first. (At this point, you will need to **Add** intervals and periods instead of Editing.)

** I would advise setting up the Second semester before the third and fourth nine weeks. While the top of your screen says “First Semester”, you will be adding things to that interval, even if they are the third and fourth nine weeks. By setting up the Second semester, you can choose to put the third and fourth grading periods into that semester instead. I have the first and second grading periods under the first semester and the third and fourth grading periods under the second semester.

To change from one semester to another (or one grading period to another), simply go to “**SELECT**”, then “**SEMESTER...**” (or nine weeks, if you want to go to another grading period). You will have the choice of first or second semester. Choose second semester, then hit **OK**. Now you can Define the third and fourth nine weeks by selecting “**DEFINE**”, then “**NINE WEEKS...**”. You will have a blank screen at this point, so you want to **Add** a nine week period. Just complete all the information like you did for the first and second nine week periods and hit **OK**. Once this is done, **SAVE** your new setup and you will be ready to put in the different categories, assignments and students for that class.

Before I forget, let’s set up the General Information and letter grade breakpoints. Go to “**DEFINE**”, then “**LETTER GRADES...**” You now have a choice of 5 different grading breakpoints. I use Multilevel BreakPoints because it allows me to assign + and - grades. To view and/or modify these grading breakpoints, choose **Edit**. You will then see not only the name of the grading method but also the grades at which each letter is cut off from the next. You can change these and put in your grading methods. For example, if your A- grades start at 93, put this in the “Value” box for A-. I also found I can get it to round to the next grade by putting in decimal points. If I want a 79.5 or higher grade to be a B-, I simply put 79.5 as the starting point for my B- grades.

The General Information is what appears on the top of the reports you print. Go to “**DEFINE**”, then “**GENERAL INFORMATION..**” Type in any information you care to and hit **OK**. NOTICE!!! The name you type in for “Teacher” will be the one that prints out on any reports you give your students!!! (I use “Mrs. Worthington”)

The last thing you need to do before you begin typing in student names is to set up your categories. Even if you don’t have different categories of assignments, you need to make one general one or the program will not be able to grade what you put in. I have four categories: homework, labs, tests, and miscellaneous (like classwork, etc.). To set up the categories (and you will need to do this in ALL the nine week grading periods - so I have to do it four times in each grading period), go to “**DEFINE**”, then “**CATEGORIES...**”. This gives you the familiar screen with “1. UNTITLED” on it. **Edit** this screen. Put in the description of the category (mine are listed previously - I’ll start with homework), your method of grading (**here I use Summation Percentage** - see attached sheet), and your letter grade BP’s. It is at this point that I weight my grades. I like to make homework 25% of the overall grade, labs 25%, miscellaneous work 20% and tests 30%, so in the “Category Weight” box for homework, I put “25”, then hit **OK**. Now back at the first screen, I can **Add** the remaining categories one by one by doing the same thing. **AFTER YOU HAVE FINISHED SETTING UP YOUR PROGRAM WITH THESE OPTIONS -- SAVE IT!!!**

---It does get somewhat tiring/old/boring/your-term-here putting in all this information for each class. What you can do to make it a little simpler (at least this is what I did) is to change what you Save As... For example, I would now save this file as (FILE, SAVE AS...) my next class, Orange. Then the only thing I would need to change would be the definition of the Subject (Change the Description from Red to Orange). This works nicely if you grade the same way in more than one (or all of) your classes.

To add students to this class, simply go to “**EDIT**”, then “**STUDENTS...**” This will give you a blank screen to start, so hit **Add**. You now have a screen that is titled Student Personal Data. Enter as much information as you like, The main thing that is needed is the name. If you would like to put in more information as a reference, feel free to do so. It will not show up on your grade screen. Notice down toward the bottom of the screen it has a part called “Status”. The little marker should be in the “Active” box. If you have a student that leaves in the middle of the year, you can remove them from

your class list by simply getting to this screen (the same way) and changing the marker from “Active” to any one of the other options that applies. Once you have entered all the information you want to on that student, hit **OK**. You now have that student listed in the first box. You can enter the students in any order you choose and they will stay that way (it won't automatically alphabetize the names). You can have the program sort the names using different criteria if you wish but I won't put it in here.

From this point, you will be **Adding** students to this list. An easy way to keep adding students without having to always return to this first screen is to hit **Add** at the bottom of the “Student Personal Data” screen instead of **OK**.

Once you have entered all the names for that class, hit **OK** until you get back to the original screen (it should be twice). You will need to enter each class separately in each separate file but after you do it once, that's all you need. You can change semester, grading period, etc. in that file and always have the same students listed for that class.

FINALLY! You need to enter the appropriate assignments. I enter them as I get them graded. You do not need to enter the grades directly on the computer or immediately after you have them recorded. You may enter them when it is convenient for you. I find it is easier for me to grade an assignment, record it in my gradebook (yes, I still keep a gradebook), then turn right around and put the grades from my gradebook right into the computer. It usually goes fairly quick as I can just zip down the line typing in numbers. HOWEVER, you may enter grades as often or not as you like.

To put in an assignment, go to “**DEFINE**”, then “**ASSIGNMENTS...**” (or whatever name you have given them). Again, the familiar blank screen, so **Add**. You will be asked for the “Description” of the assignment (here I put - if it is homework - the pages, or if it is a lab - the name, etc.), a “Correlated Objective” (I don't use them), a “First Category Link”, and a “Second Category Link”. I don't use the Second Category Link. The First Category Link is essential to the assignment being graded. If there is no link, the program does not know how to process the grades you put in. Here is where you put the assignment into one of the categories you set up earlier. This is why, even if you don't put your work into categories, you need to make one general one to connect all the assignments to. You will also notice that you have a “Primary Grading Method” and a “Secondary Grading Method”. I only use the primary grading method. I check to make sure the Letter Grade BP's are on Multilevel BreakPoints and don't worry about the rest of the

information in that box. I DO list the “Due Date” and the “Max Points” on the right side.

If I want to put in Extra Credit, I indicate that it is in the Description and simply put zero (0) possible points in the “Max Points” box. I DO NOT USE THE LITTLE “EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENT” MARK ABOVE THE DUE DATE BOX. At this point, hit **OK** if you are finished entering your assignments or **Add** if you want to enter more. Once you get back to the main screen, you will notice that the assignment is listed at the top of the student names list when that column has the cursor/bright box in it.

You can begin putting in grades at this point. By entering a grade and hitting return, the box will automatically go down the list. On the right side of the screen, you will see the average of the category you are currently highlighting. I prefer to see their nine week grades. To change what grade you view on the right, go to “**SELECT**”, then “**RESULT COLUMN..**”. Choose what grade you want to see and hit **OK**. You may also change how many decimal places show in the result column. To modify this, go to “**OPTIONS**”, then “**SIGNIFICANT DIGITS..**” You may choose how many decimal places you want to see and if you want the program to round the decimals.

Once you have everything set to your grading style, it is quite easy to use. If you made it through this, you’re doing great!!! Just always remember to **SAVE** before you exit (although the program usually reminds you anyway).

Hopefully, this gave you an idea of how to find your way around the Excelsior Grade Program and an idea of how I use it. Good luck!

Choose the Right Grading Methods for the Class

Grade2 has four grading methods defined for you to use to calculate grades. You can choose to use Averaging, Summation, Raw Score Conversion to Percent, or Summation Percentage. Or, you can define your own grading method with the formula generator (see Define Calculation Methods).

In a class file, you are asked to choose a calculation method at four different levels. You choose a Subject method of grading which determines how to combine interval grades to produce a subject grade. You choose an Interval method of grading which determines how to combine period grades to produce an interval grade. You choose a Period method of grading which determines how to combine category grades to produce a period grade. You also choose a Category method of grading which determines how grade assignment scores are combined to produce a category grade.

You may use the same method of grading at all levels, such as Averaging. Or you may need to choose different grading methods at the levels to produce the grades you want. Below are some examples of how to set up some grading schemes.

Scheme 1: You are entering percentage grades in the grading columns (i.e. Max value is 100). Use Averaging at all the levels.

****Scheme 2:** You are entering raw scores or points for the students in the grading columns, and you want to produce a percentage grade for the categories. Use Raw Score Conversion or *Summation Percentage* for the category method of grading and use *Averaging* at period, interval, and subject levels.

****what I use**

Scheme 3: You are entering raw scores or points for the students in the grading columns. You want the category grades to be total points earned in the category, yet you want to report a percentage grade for the period. Use Summation for the category method of grading, use Raw Score Conversion, or Summation Percentage for the period method of grading, and use Averaging for the interval and subject levels.

If you want to create your own method of grading, see the Define Calculation Methods topic.

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This is from the Help index under
Choose the Right Grading Methods for the Class

**Raw Score Conversion* – changes each grade into a percent and averages the percents

**Summation Percentage* – totals the points first, then averages the total earned out of total possible.

*These two come out slightly different