

Physics 131— Physics I: Mechanics
Section 01 (MWF 8:25 a.m.)
Interpreting Your Grade
April 1, 2026

At this point, we have two tests (out of three) and seven graded homework assignments (out of 11). I have estimated your grade in the following way:

Tests: These are your test scores so far. The three tests normally count for 40% of the total grade.

Homework: This is the average of all the homework problem sets graded so far, but with the lowest score dropped. The grade for each week is obtained by adding the number of online points (from MasteringPhysics) plus the number of pencil-and-paper points, and dividing by the total number of points that week. Each week is weighted equally.

Lab: Since I don't have lab grades yet, I have assumed an average of 85.

Final Exam: This will be the final exam score. We don't have a final exam yet, but in order to estimate a final grade, I have to guess what your exam score might be. Typically, the average final exam score is about 5 to 10 points lower than the overall test average, so for the purpose of estimating your final grade, I have assumed the exam grades will be 5 points lower than the average of your tests so far.

Actual Course Total: This is ultimately the one that counts. It is the one you should look at to estimate your course grade as of right now.

This is the weighted average of all your scores, computed according to the weighting in the syllabus: homework (20%), tests (40% total), the final exam (20%), and the laboratory (20%). The lowest test or final exam score will only count as half of the usual total. If the lowest score is one of the three tests, then that test will only count for 8% of the total, and the two remaining tests will each count for 16% of the total (for a total of 40% for the tests.) If the final exam is the lowest score, it will only count for 10%, and the test average will count for 50%. I will pick whichever weighting gives you a higher total. The lowest homework assignment has been dropped.

Feel free to ask questions about how your grade is determined.

Other Moodle Entries: Moodle may list some other items as well, but the ones listed here are the only ones that count.

Grade: This is my current estimate of your final overall letter grade. *Note:* Moodle insists on assigning letter grades to each individual activity, even though such assignments are not meaningful. *Ignore them.* The *Actual Course Total* letter grade is the only one that matters. For the purposes of this estimate, I use the following cutoffs:

93-100	A
90-93	A-
87-90	B+
83-87	B
80-83	B-
77-80	C+
73-77	C
70-73	C-
67-70	D+
63-67	D
60-63	D-
< 60	F

If you spot any errors, please contact me promptly and I will fix them.

Adjustments: One of the reasons for having three hour tests, instead of a single midterm and a final, is so that you are not unduly affected by a single “bad day.” To help out even more, I weight the tests and exam to count your best scores more heavily. The specific recipe is described above, and also in the syllabus.

Finally, I do occasionally make small adjustments upward. When it comes time to assign final grades, I will look carefully at not just the final total numerical score, but also at progress throughout the semester and at any special or unusual circumstances that might affect your grade. I will also adjust the scale, if necessary, to compensate for disparities among the different lecture sections, or disparities among lab sections, or problems with any individual tests or the final exam.