

Grading System

Letter grades often do not tell us much about whether or not you have achieved the learning outcomes of a class. While you will receive a letter grade at the end of the course, this letter grade will reflect not only that you have achieved certain outcomes but also at what height you took the hurdles to prove so. We will be using a **mastery or competency-based approach to grading** which means that you will show that you have mastered a concept or a skill. With this approach comes some choice for you as you decide which grade you want to achieve and which requirements for each assignment you fulfill.

Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory

All assignments (except for the final exam) in the course will be assessed as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory, with the specifications required for Satisfactory articulated on each assignment. In general, Satisfactory should not be viewed as “minimally competent,” but rather a mark of having achieved the assignment’s learning goals and specifications (probably more like a B grade in an average course). **Either an assignment meets the goals or it does not – there is no gradation of assessment and no partial credit.**

Bundles and Final Grade

The only letter grade that will be given in the course will be your final grade, and it will reflect the “bundle” of assignments and requirements you have satisfactorily accomplished in the class (see next page). This system gives you full control over which of these bundles you will strive to accomplish, based on your own learning priorities and self-aware judgement over time-management and intellectual goals. **All items of a bundle have to be achieved**, otherwise the next bundle counts. Modified grades of + and – will be used when a student’s Satisfactory activities only slightly miss the mark (e.g. one project step unsatisfactory for the A-bundle = A-).

Flex-Passes for Flexibility

Since every element of the course is assessed on an all-or-nothing basis, it might be stressful to strive for Satisfactory given that the stakes for not meeting that threshold may be significant. To ease stress, to allow for flexibility – and most of all, to maximize opportunities for learning – every student starts the course with 3 flex-passes that can be “exchanged” **for extensions or opportunities for revision**. See assignments below for details.

Grade Bundles

A-Bundle

Assignments

Active Participation
Homework
Homework+
Quizzes
Projects
Final Exam

Requirements

At least 14 active participation points.
All but 3 homework assignments done satisfactorily.
All 8 homework+ activities done satisfactorily.
All quizzes passed.
All projects and all steps completed satisfactorily.
Final Exam completed with at least 85%.

B-Bundle

Assignments

Active Participation
Homework
Homework+
Quizzes
Projects
Final Exam

Requirements

At least 11 active participation points.
All but 6 homework assignments done satisfactorily.
6 out of 8 homework+ done satisfactorily.
All quizzes but one passed.
All projects passed satisfactorily (two steps may be unsatisfactory).
Final Exam completed with at least 80%.

C-Bundle

Assignments

Active Participation
Homework
Homework+
Quizzes
Projects
Final Exam

Requirements

At least 8 active participation points.
All but 9 homework assignments done satisfactorily.
4 out of 8 homework+ done satisfactorily.
All quizzes but two passed.
All projects but one passed satisfactorily (OR four steps may be unsatisfactory).
Final Exam completed with at least 75%.

Assignments

Active Participation

We learn a language by using it. While it can be scary at first and we feel we cannot construct sentences as complex as our thoughts, we can only get better by trying (and failing, for that matter). Therefore, classtime will be for using German actively and to communicate with each other. Active participation in this class means:

- You come to class prepared (you have done your homework)
- You stay in German for the whole class period (except for when the English sign is up)
- You are fully engaged in what we are doing in class

You can receive one point for active participation after each class.

Homework

Homework is absolutely crucial to your success. Without studying the grammar and doing the corresponding exercises, you will not be able to participate in class and you will fall behind. Therefore, homework is mandatory for everyone and for every bundle you are striving to achieve. Homework is due before class on Tuesday and Thursday (LERNEN) and after Thursday's class (ZEIGEN). I recommend spreading out the ZEIGEN activities. Homework is graded as satisfactory if it was done thoughtfully. That doesn't mean that everything needs to be correct for credit, but it does have to show that you engaged with the grammar explanations and are using the instructions. While you can use a token for 48 hours of extension, I don't recommend it because you will not be able to participate in class and therefore will lose valuable time engaging in the language. Staying on top of your homework will give you the very best foundation for the grade you want to achieve.

Homework+

Regular homework is graded for completion only. In addition, there are two homework+ activities for each chapter that will be graded using the mastery approach (requirements for satisfactory will be posted). These are usually writing exercises or video/audio reviews that will demonstrate that you have mastered the skills of the chapter. You may use flex-passes for a 48 hour extension or a revision of homework+ activities.

Assignments continued

Quizzes

There will be quizzes for grammar and vocabulary. Both of these types are satisfactory/passed if you achieve 85% of the available points. This means that you have mastered the grammar/active vocabulary of a chapter and that you are able to successfully move on. We are using this mastery approach to ensure that you are well equipped for the next activities. Language learning is cumulative, we have to know and be able to use one grammar item to conquer the next.

You will have the chance to take quizzes multiple times (one flex-pass = one attempt) until you have mastered the concept. The re-takes will happen in person during my office hours.

Projects

Projects take the place of chapter exams and essays. They consist of multiple steps and include reading or listening comprehension, interpersonal communication with your peers and oral or written presentations. They, thus, test all skills necessary for communicating in a language. All projects come with checklists of requirements. The whole checklist has to be completed for the project to count as satisfactory. You can use a flex-passes for revising a step that doesn't yet meet the requirements. Note that for the A-bundle each step and the whole project has to meet all requirements and for the B-bundle all projects have to be passed satisfactorily but two steps can be unsatisfactory. For the C-bundle, you either pass three of four projects satisfactorily or all of them with four steps being unsatisfactory. If you strive for a C and you pass the first three projects completely, you will not have to do project 4 (although it is a fun project and you may want to anyhow).

Final Exam

There will be only one exam in this class and it is the final exam. The final exam will be cumulative and will include grammar exercises, reading and listening comprehension, and a writing task. If you have mastered all items along the way, you will be well equipped to take the exam. Note that we use a mastery approach here as well. If you strive for the A-bundle, you have to pass the final exam with at least 85% of the points, 80% for B and 75% for C. You cannot use any flex-passes for the final exam.