

What Grades Mean in College

Most college students do not understand grades the same way that professors do. When you come from a school background where A's were not a reward for exceptional work, but the basic grade given to anyone who wasn't an abject failure, it means that you do not know what an A actually stands for.

Too many students think that they should get an A if they follow all the directions and do everything the teacher said to do, whether they did it well or not. Unfortunately, in college you are judged not by how much time you put in, or how much work you feel you did, or how much stress you felt. You are judged mainly, and often only, by your work. Simply writing eight pages does not a term paper make!

This means that **grades mean something different in college**. Most often, here is what the grades correspond to at a college level:

F = No work done, or work done to such a low standard that it wastes the professor's time to grade it. When students turn in F-level work (if they turn it in at all), it is obvious that they did not prepare, did not study, or simply did not care enough to do the work at the level expected in college.

D = Some work done, but not well enough to meet the standard set by the professor for basic completion of the work assigned. When students turn in D-level work, they have skimmed, skimped, or skipped over the important points and simply filled in a space or checked off a box. There is very little, if any, thought apparent in work at this level.

C = Average. This is the basic level that all professors expect of college students. When students turn in C-level work, they have answered all questions at the minimum level expected for competency in the course, but they have not pressed beyond that point. If all you're doing is completing homework to the bare minimum standard or writing papers by their page count, this is the grade you can probably expect.

B = Above average. This is the level of a student who goes the extra mile. Instead of just answering a question, this student makes a point of investigating the question and responding at a level above the baseline. This student's work shows a better level of comprehension of the material than is expected. This level of work may show a few errors, but the quality of the work exceeds the expectations of the course.

A = Superior. This is a level not easily achieved. This student goes beyond the extra mile and does their best to produce professional-quality work. This level of work has been combed over and checked to reduce and eliminate errors, it shows a high level of understanding and comprehension of the material, and the quality of the work is observably better than B-level work.