



Teaching with Technology Tip

ESTABLISHING CATEGORIES IN A MOODLE GRADEBOOK

Moodle allows teachers to establish categories in a gradebook, which can serve a couple different purposes:

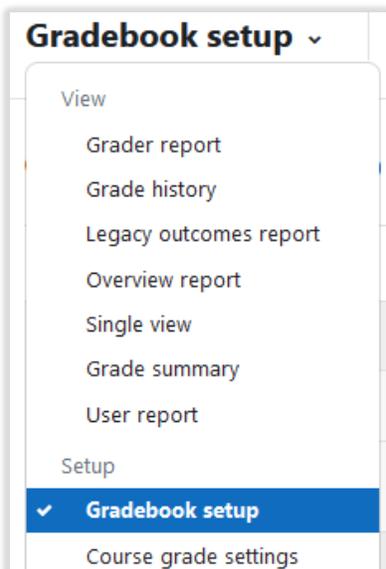
1. Simply group a certain type of assignments/grades without effecting the overall grade calculation.
2. Grouping grades together to give that category a specific weight in the final grade calculation.

When setting up categories in a gradebook, it's important to know how categories and their settings can possibly affect grade calculations. For example, based on the calculation method used, not putting an item into a category or into the wrong category, can create errors in the final calculation.

Creating a Gradebook Category

Important Note: Keep in mind that when you add a category, you're really adding a "subcategory" under Moodle's overall category for that course. Moodle also uses the terminology "category" when editing the overall course grade.

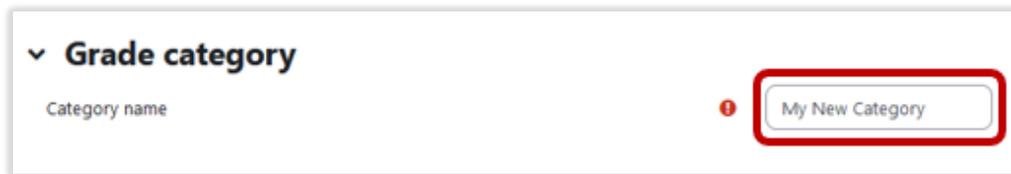
To create a category, click on **Grades** in the course main menu. Then select **Setup** the dropdown menu.



Click on the **Add category** button, located to the right of the dropdown menu.

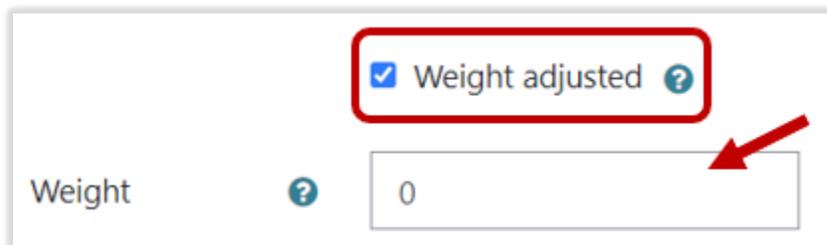


Start by giving your category a name, using the same vocabulary used in the syllabus.



Expanding the **Parent category** menu will provide you with a couple of important options. Foremost, Moodle will present the opportunity to house this new category within another category. Mostly likely, you will want to choose the default setting, which is making the overall course grade (as noted by the course's name) the parent category.

You may also wish to define the weight of this category and not allow Moodle to recalculate that weight based on items added later. To do so, look for the **Parent category** section. Select **Weight adjusted** by clicking the box then inputting the desired **Weight**.



Note: If you do not set weights for your categories, Moodle will do so for you based on the point value assigned to grades within a category relative to the points available in other categories.

Note: It is possible to assign a weight of zero to a category, both accidentally and on purpose, if you do not change the default weight to something besides 0. A category with a weight of 0 will not add those grades into the course total. If 0 is not the intended weight for the category, the overall course grades will not be correct. However, a category with a 0 weight can useful for many purposes.

Category Type and Possible Effects Grade Aggregation

Different categories and how the category totals are aggregated can serve distinct purposes and alter the overall course grade in a number of ways—sometimes in unintended ways. Therefore, it's important to understand the ways that category aggregation methods can affect overall course grades.

Categories Using Mean of Grades Aggregations

If you select the **Mean of grades** aggregation method, you're asking Moodle to treat every grade in that category the same by assigning the same weight to each one, no matter the points involved. You can easily drop the lowest/keep the highest grades within a Mean of grades category. For instance, if you wish to drop each student's lowest grade in that category, begin by clicking **Show more** under the Grade category section; then, just put a 1 in the **Drop the lowest** box. Using a Mean of grades aggregation is probably the most dependable method for dropping a specified number of grades.

Keep the highest ? 0

Drop the lowest ? 1

Categories Using Natural Aggregation

If you select **Natural** aggregation, you are telling Moodle to sum up the points a student earned and divide by the points possible to calculate the grade for that category. Under Natural grading, Moodle will automatically set the total possible to 100, essentially 100%, and not allow you to alter that setting. Natural aggregation in a category permits only **Value** grades to be displayed.

Within subcategories, Moodle's **Natural** grading does allow instructors to drop a designated number of lowest or keep a designated number of highest grades. *Warning: If you ask Moodle to drop grades from a category using Natural aggregation, understand that Moodle will drop the grades with the lowest/highest percentage earned. As a result, the final grade calculation will vary by student and may not reflect the instructor's intentions; therefore, if you are using Natural aggregation for a subcategory and wish to drop lowest/keep highest grades, make sure to manually assign the same weight to each grade item in the category.*

Categories Using Weighted Mean OR Simple Weighted Mean Aggregation

In a **Simple weighted mean of grades** aggregation calculates grades by weighting items according to the points assigned to them. In a **Weighted mean of grades** aggregation, the instructor establishes the weight that a grade item or category contributes to the overall grade.

Within subcategories, these aggregation strategies allow instructors to drop a designated number of lowest or keep a designated number of highest grades. *Warning: If you ask Moodle to drop the lowest or keep the highest grades from a category using either weighted aggregation strategy, understand that Moodle will drop/keep the grades with the lowest/highest percentage earned. As a result, the final grade calculation will vary by student and may not reflect the instructor's intentions.*