# Tech Snacks: Brightspace Gradebook

Each year, OTLE conducts a Brightspace experience survey, and one of the common themes that students mention is the Brightspace gradebook. Students consider gradebook organization one of the most important aspects of their Brightspace experience. We've outlined some tips below.

Accessing the Gradebook

1. When logged into Brightspace, click into one of your courses.
2. Click **Progress > Grades**
3. Choose one of the following tabs:
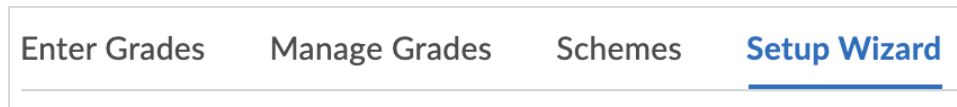
Using the Setup Wizard

The Setup Wizard walks you through seven steps of personalized settings.

Step 1: Choose Grading System
- **Weighted:** A weighted system calculates grade categories as a percentage of a final grade worth 100%, with each grade item falling under a category.
- **Points:** The student's cumulative grade is based on the total points earned, divided by the total points available.

Step 2: Final Grade Released
- **Calculated Final Grade:** This is the final grade calculated by Brightspace based on your grading system.
- **Adjusted Final Grade:** The final calculated grade will be displayed but the instructor can manually adjust that final grade in a separate column.
- **Automatically release final grade:** This setting must be checked for students to automatically see their final grade as it is updated.

Step 3: Grade Calculations
- **Drop ungraded items:** Ungraded items do not count towards the final grade.
- **Treat ungraded items as 0:** Ungraded items are treated as 0% in the final grade calculation. ****Note on treating ungraded items as 0:* When this setting is checked, students will start with a final grade of F(0%) and work up to an A as they complete work.
- **Automatically keep final grade updated:** When this setting is checked, final grades will be updated as new grades are calculated into the gradebook.

Step 4: Choose Default Grade Scheme
The default setting is Percentage, which is generally the grade scheme that most departments on campus use. We don't recommend changing this setting.

Step 5: Managing View Display Options
This allows you to choose the number of decimal places to display in your Gradebook. *Example:* two decimal places would show a 97.85%; one would show 97.9%.

Step 6: Student View Display Options
These settings are generally left unchanged.

Step 7: Grades Setup Summary
This final screen gives you a summary of all of the settings you selected for your Gradebook. You can go back through the Setup Wizard and fix anything if needed.

OTLE's Top Ten Gradebook Tips

- **Make sure your gradebook matches your syllabus's grading criteria.** Students will notice if it does not match and assume the worst.

- **When in doubt, use a weighted system rather than a points system.** The weighted system makes it easier to see the actual impact of each assignment in your grading system. It's also easier to add and remove items within categories and minimally affect the overall balance of your grading scheme if you use a weighted system. If you use a points system, test out a student grade scenario to make sure you understand the impact of your point values.

- **Use categories for your grade items!** Categories make it easier to see what's going on for both the instructor and the student. They also help you see if items are weighted consistently.

- **Make sure grade item titles match the activity they are linked to.** If your quiz is titled "Chapter 10 Quiz" but your grade item is titled "Quiz on Economics," it can cause confusion.

- **Create grade items for in-class work.** Gradebook items do not need to be attached to a Brightspace activity. (Thanks to Thomas for discovering this!)

- **Reorder when things are out of sequence.** Visual organization is very helpful for both the instructor and the students. Under the Manage Grades tab, go to More actions > Reorder.

- **Use "View as a Student" to see what your Gradebook looks like from a student perspective.** If you do this, it's easier to see what you may need to fix or rearrange for clarity. You'll also note that your assignment feedback shows up next to the student's numeric grade.

- **Enter zeros for missing work.** As soon as a deadline passes, enter zeroes for students who missed the deadline (regardless of your late policy). They will likely receive a text message or email that notifies them of the 0 grade and will respond more quickly to a zero than a friendly email reminder to get their assignment in.

- **If you are behind on grading, let students know**. Students forget that instructors are human and tend to want to know their grades immediately. It's not a bad idea to create an announcement that lets them know when you plan to be finished with grading a particular assignment. If you're behind, let them know your plan. Communication is key!

- **Ask OTLE for help ASAP if your gradebook seems "messed up."** It will not fix itself and time only makes it worse. Trust us. :)