



Process Over Product with Labor-Based Grading

Many instructors adopt a process approach to writing, assigning multiple drafts and offering feedback for revision; they nonetheless maintain that ultimately a student must receive a grade based on the instructor-determined caliber of the final product in order to maintain high academic standards. This traditional grading system can be demotivating, increase anxiety, discourage creativity and risk-taking, and unleash linguistic bias. In contrast, labor-based grading focuses on effort and improvement and can result in greater student engagement, innovation, and growth. This article explains labor-based grading, illustrates its use in a multilingual (L2) first-year university writing class, and suggests ways to adopt it in other L2 teaching contexts. Drawing on classroom practice, the authors show how labor-based grading, when used in conjunction with revision and a process approach to writing, can foster learning from error and a greater enjoyment of writing as an act of creation.

Keywords: writing, feedback revision, traditional grading system, labor-based grading, multilingual

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Writing instructors have long embraced process-based pedagogy, and language teachers more generally acknowledge that learning comes over time and with practice. But sometimes time and practice are not enough for students to effectively progress as writers. Learning to write also requires supported risk taking and open communication with peers and instructors in order to feel invested in their work and to develop a sense of competence. Studies of student writers indicate a positive correlation between the self-efficacy of student writers and their demonstrated performance (Pajares & Valiante, 1997), thus supporting the connection between student motivation and learning outcomes.

Given this emphasis on revision, growth, and positive evaluation, language instructors tend to provide ample opportunities for multiple drafts and other forms of practice. Low-stakes assignments receive encouraging feedback such as “Nice paraphrasing here!” or “Great specifics. See if you can add details like this in your next paragraph, too!” In contrast, final drafts and projects are typically assessed using a multiple-point scale, sometimes with rubric headers placing student writing into categories such as “unsatisfactory,” “marginal,” or “novice.” Instructors can feel pressured to ensure that their summative assessment is “robust,” often interpreted to mean using grades to extrinsically motivate students to put time and effort into their assignments. While this extrinsic motivation might be effective in prompting many students to take an assignment seriously, it also creates considerable anxiety and typically overemphasizes microlevel errors such as punctuation and grammar and underemphasizes overall clarity, effectiveness, and creativity.

Unlike traditional forms of assessment, labor-based grading does not evaluate students on “mastery” of a skill. Instead, assessment is based on whether students have completed a task and demonstrated writing development or growth in a student learning objective. This form of assessment allows instructors to assess students in a way that is consistent with their teaching principles and based on current best pedagogical practices. Some instructors may express concern that labor-based grading lowers academic standards, but a growing number of instructors recognize that labor-based grading potentially increases academic performance and learning, while lowering anxiety and boosting motivation.

Positioned as a pedagogical analysis grounded in classroom practice, this article defines labor-based grading, explains its rationale for L2 writing instruction, and demonstrates its implementation in a first-year writing course. It further provides examples illustrating how labor-based grading can be adapted for use in other L2 contexts.

Labor-Based Learning Defined

Labor-based grading is an assessment practice that emerged in the early twentieth century through contract grading, first articulated by Frank (1933) alongside a growing emphasis on process-based writing pedagogy. Later scholars such as Peter Elbow (1968) expanded this approach by using grading contracts to foster dialogue between instructors and students about learning and differentiated outcomes within a course. These contracts linked course grades to student–teacher partnerships and mutually agreed-upon labor, rather than to instructor judgments about the quality of student writing. However, early contract grading models were criticized for not fully addressing how quality-based judgments continue to privilege dominant linguistic and cultural norms.

Later, contract grading was reframed as labor-based grading with an explicit focus on social justice and anti-racist assessment practices. Scholars such as Huot (2002), Bizzell (1992), Lu (1994), and Inoue (2015, 2019) theorized writing assessment as an ecological system shaped by race, language, and power. Inoue advanced labor-based grading contracts to make assessment more transparent and equitable by centering student labor rather than subjective evaluations of quality. This approach aligns with research on linguistic justice (Young, 2007) and continues to generate productive debate about rigor, equity, and the ethics of writing assessment. For a comprehensive understanding of grading contracts, see Cowan (2020).

Today's labor-based grading practices are often associated with contract grading, where students and the teacher co-create assessment criteria for the course. Labor-based grading deemphasizes letter grades by focusing on students' labor, learning, and agency, and in most versions, teachers do not assign a range of points (e.g., 0-100) or grades (e.g., A-F) to individual student assignments based on instructor-determined "quality" of the work. This assessment practice is motivated by the underlying belief that a single, polished paper does not represent learning as well as the various drafts that show students' researching, drafting, and revising labor (Inoue, 2022, p. 106). In order to encourage thoughtful, reflective writing in which students make meaningful and effective changes to their work, many labor-based assignments require students to revise based on the feedback of the instructor and their peers as well as their own critical reading and self-evaluation.

The Rationale for Labor-Based Grading in L2 Writing Instruction

Labor-based grading allows writing instructors to follow current best pedagogical practices for L2 writing. With labor-based grading, students are evaluated on completion of a writing task and growth shown in their writing from one draft to the next. This assessment practice emphasizes individual learning and development by recognizing effort and improvements rather than "perfect" product or "mastery" of a skill. Writing is seen as a process that is developed over time through practice and revision. While many L2 writing instructors today favor the process over the product approach (see Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005), traditional grading typically overemphasizes a heavily weighted final product and underemphasizes the process, with minimal points attributed to idea generation, peer review, and earlier drafts. Ultimately, if instructors lower a student's grade because the final product has more grammatical errors or less sophisticated organization of content, that instructor is communicating to the student that it does not matter how much effort the student has put into the assignment; in essence, the learner is expected to meet a certain "standard of quality" that the teacher has established.

When students realize that their labor-based grade does not depend on their grammatical prowess but rather on the effort put into their work, much of the anxiety that can lead to writer's block and less effective writing is eliminated. Giving full credit to learners who meet assignment guidelines decenters the focus on grades, which can harm students' interest in learning, willingness to take risks, and ability to think creatively (Kohn, 1999). Less concerned over how they are going to write "A paper," students become more autonomous and more invested in their work, and ultimately more likely to view the substance of their work in a positive light, which creates and maintains student motivation (Dörnyei & Ushiod, 2021).

Beyond the effects on an individual student writer's confidence, investment, creativity, and motivation, labor-based grading has the potential to advance social change by minimizing or even eliminating racism and other forms of linguistic bias (Inoue, 2022). Instructors who adopt labor-based grading typically do not assess based on standards of writing or English that reflect linguistic patterns of the ethnicity, race, and socio-economic class of those in power.

Finally, labor-based grading can be used to tackle some of the concerns that have arisen with recent artificial intelligence (AI) developments such as ChatGPT and their potential use in L2 writing classrooms. Research in second language writing suggests that students' academic dishonesty is typically driven less by intent to deceive than by anxiety about the class and not meeting academic expectations (Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2019; Hyland, 2015; Li & Casanave, 2012; Pecorari, 2013). These pressures tend to intensify in

contexts where students perceive high-stakes assessment as emphasizing textual polish over learning, potentially increasing reliance on AI tools as compensatory resources rather than as support for learning.

While generative AI can assist with idea generation, language awareness, and revision, its pedagogical impact depends largely on how writing is assessed and framed (Barrot, 2023; Kohnke et al., 2025). In our version of labor-based grading, the attention shifts away from producing an error-free final product and toward sustained engagement in the writing process. This allows students at different stages of linguistic development to fully participate without penalty for nonstandard language use (Inoue, 2019). Because grades are tied to effort, reflection, and revision rather than surface-level correctness, students may experience reduced pressure to rely on AI tools rather than on their own writing skills. The process-oriented expectations inherent in labor-based grading complicate the uncritical use of AI, particularly when writers are required to rearticulate ideas for different purposes, audiences, or genres. In this way, labor-based grading aligns with disciplinary calls to respond to AI not through surveillance or prohibition, but through assessment practices that foreground learning, transparency, and rhetorical development (Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2019; Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, & Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2023).

It is worth noting that, while labor-based grading has myriad benefits to both students and teachers, this practice is certainly not a perfect solution to assessing student writing -- no such system exists. Scholars like Nancy Reichert (2003) argue that labor-based grading that focuses primarily on the instructor's goals for the class has the possibility of better serving teachers than students. Inman and Powell (2018) remind us to consider the confusion of changing from the familiar language and practice of grading since, in their study, "students' responses suggest they enjoyed the freedoms associated with course-contract methods of grading but felt adrift without the reassurances provided by grades" (p. 45). Moreover, while labor-based grading is typically intended to promote equity, scholars like Ellen Carillo (2021) rightly point out that even well-intentioned use of such an assessment ecology may still privilege certain students since practitioners may "inaccurately [assume] that labor is a neutral measure—or at least that it is less inequitable a measure than quality" (p.11).

While labor-based grading is not without its limitations, it nonetheless addresses some of the concerns of the traditional grading system. Given both the individual and the social ramifications, summing up a student's writing with a number (e.g., 84%) or a grade (C-) has potentially damaging effects. At the very least, it is a disservice to students, a form of assessment that neither explicitly recognizes the effort a student has made nor encourages an individual's growth as a writer. In fact, "a single grade hardly sums up the complicated mixture of strengths and weaknesses present in students' work, and if an instructor's goal is to teach invention, feedback, revision, and other process-oriented skills, grading one final product misses the point entirely" (Cowan, 2020, p. 1).

The following section describes how labor-based grading was implemented in the authors' writing course for university students in their first semester. In numerous iterations of the course over the years, instructors observed strong student engagement, sustained revision practices, and substantial writerly growth throughout each semester. While labor-based grading is increasingly frequent in the composition classroom, it is far less common in L2 pedagogy, and scholarship only rarely addresses the ways in which labor-based grading might be implemented in the language classroom. The objective of the following section is, therefore, to illustrate how labor-based grading can be applied in an L2 writing course while highlighting important features in the course design to increase effectiveness and impact.

Pedagogical Framework

Grounded in classroom observations, intentional course design, and student feedback, this analysis illustrates how labor-based grading can function in practice. The discussion does not aim for broad generalization but instead draws on reflective teaching, classroom observations, and iterative course design across multiple offerings of the course. Insights into student learning are presented through instructor self-reflection on pedagogical practices rather than through systematic analysis of student-generated materials.

The approach is shaped by five core learning goals that align with established scholarship in writing studies and L2 pedagogy. First, building a shared vocabulary around writing and rhetoric supports students' ability to talk about and reflect on their writing, a key component of metacognitive development (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015). Second, recognizing individual writing processes reflects long-standing process-oriented views of writing, which emphasize recursive drafting, revision, and reflection rather than linear production (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Murray, 1972). Third, seeing language as contextual and persuasive draws on rhetorical traditions that frame

writing as situated action shaped by audience, purpose, and context (Bitzer, 1968; Hyland, 2004). Fourth, exploring how writing functions across different situations aligns with genre-based approaches that emphasize transfer and adaptability across contexts (Devitt, 2009; Johns, 2008). Finally, creating real-world genres for specific rhetorical purposes reflects calls in both composition and L2 writing scholarship to engage students in meaningful, authentic writing tasks that foreground purpose and audience (Beaufort, 2007; Matsuda, 2012). Writing tasks throughout the course emphasize process, revision, and reflection. The grading system is intentionally clear, fair, and designed to motivate -- centering student effort over correctness.

These learning goals are well-suited to labor-based grading, which prioritize effort, revision, and sustained engagement over error-free products. By centering labor rather than correctness, the grading system reinforces process-oriented learning and reduces the linguistic penalty often experienced by multilingual writers (Inoue, 2015; Matsuda & Cox, 2011).

Implementing Labor-Based Grading in a First-Year University Writing Course

Course Context

Seeking to empower first-year university writers, the authors leverage labor-based grading to encourage active engagement and self-reflection in the course. This section describes how the authors have built their curriculum for one unit of an English 101 course in order to illustrate the ease and robustness of this grading process.

The authors' six-credit English 101M ("M" for multilingual) course satisfies one of two first-year writing requirements at a large public university located in a refugee resettlement city. English 101M meets six academic hours a week for 15 weeks and covers the same course objectives and, for many units, the same content as the three-credit English 101 course. During the additional three hours a week in English 101M, students have opportunities to ask questions, discuss the readings, make connections between the readings and their own writing, peer review, and conference with the instructor.

Unit Design and Scaffolding

The course asks students to reflect on the question: How do we improve as writers rather than improve individual pieces of writing? Over the first five-week unit of the course, students examine their relationship to writing. In week one, students explore rhetorical situation, audience, and the writing processes; in week two, students examine their personal writing experience and compare it to something; in week three, students describe how their experience with writing is represented by a particular metaphor (e.g., writing is like building a nest); in week four, students learn about the infographic as a genre and create an infographic and accessible description depicting their writing metaphor; and in week five, students peer review, revise, and submit their culminating assignment. See Figure 1 for a sample activity guiding students through the process of identifying and sharing a metaphor.

Figure 1

Sample Activity: Identify and Share your Writing Metaphor

1. Journal writing: Think back to a time when you had to complete a memorable (good or bad) writing assignment. What metaphor would you use to describe/compare writing to? You might consider returning to the Weekly Individual Writing that you did in Module 03 to get you started. Spend two minutes writing about this. Make sure you can articulate the reason you have chosen this metaphor.
2. Group discussion: Share your metaphor with the members of your small group. Look for similarities and differences in the metaphors you all chose. Look for themes that emerge from these metaphors. For example, did you all consider the different steps in the writing process? Did you all think of writing as an activity that was fun and/or hard work?
3. Speed-selling your metaphor
 - a. Step 1: Place your desks in two rows, one facing the other. You have two minutes to explain your metaphor to your partner sitting across from you. Be sure to include the reasons you have

chosen this metaphor and three to five ways in which you can compare writing to this other thing/process. Spend one minute discussing (1) what you like about your partner's metaphor and (2) what else you would like to see in their metaphor.

- b. Step 2: Switch partners. With your second partner, you have only 90 minutes to share your metaphor. Switch partners again. This time, you have only one minute.
- c. Step 3: Class discussion. What elements helped to make the writing metaphors particularly effective?

Throughout the unit, assignments are scaffolded so that from week to week students further develop earlier work: revising ideas, connections between ideas, vocabulary, and grammar. Each weekly writing assignment within a unit increases in complexity, of both idea and form. For example, in week 3, students describe their writing metaphor in paragraph form; in week 4, students add to and clarify their metaphor ideas and then rewrite their metaphor as an infographic.

Every week, students engage with the ideas through readings, interactive mini-lectures, journaling, class and small-group discussions, collaborative activities, and a 500-word writing assignment. In week 4, for instance, students read several articles about effective infographics and formatting and design to learn about the infographic as a genre. The interactive lecture covers the CRAP (contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity) Principle (See Williams, 2008) with students working in groups to find and critique infographics. In preparation for writing the accessible description of their infographic, students journal about what the word *accessibility* means to them, with examples of what is (or is not) accessible. Then, in pairs, one student describes an infographic in words while another student draws it based on the description. This activity is designed to help students grasp the need for clarity and precision in the accessible description that accompanies an infographic. The weekly writing assignment asks students to create an infographic depicting their writing metaphor and write the accompanying accessible description. In week 3, before creating their infographic, students are expected to re-read their initial 500-word text in which they describe their writing metaphor. Students are to reflect on feedback received on the week 3 writing and consider changes in content and form that will be required given the new genre (i.e., the infographic) for week 4.

Assessment Criteria and Revision Practices

The grading for each assignment is straightforward. Students receive credit for completing each assignment (e.g., one point for writing five minutes in their journal; one point for participating in the collaborative activity). The weekly writing assignment rubric (see Figure 2) gives students one point for responding to the prompt and one point for showing evidence of substantial revision using suggesting mode in their Google doc. With this rubric, students may receive half credit for a partial attempt to respond to the prompt or to revise their work. To ensure that the criteria remain measurable and assessable, the rubric explicitly distinguishes between surface-level editing (e.g., correcting spelling, punctuation, capitalization) for half credit and "substantial" revision (e.g., adding or deleting passages; replacing words or phrases for more precise meaning or to suit the genre; restructuring phrases, clauses, sentences, or paragraphs) for full credit. In class, students are given examples of writing assignments to illustrate the difference between "surface-level editing" and "substantial revision." Students are always given the opportunity to resubmit work for full credit if they received only partial credit and wish to revise further.

Figure 2

Weekly Individual Writing Rubric

Weekly Individual Writing Rubric				
Criteria	Ratings			Pts
Required Elements This assignment must contain the following in order to be eligible for grading: assignment is submitted in the correct document; document is named correctly; assignment is between 400-500 words	0 pts Eligible for Grading Assignment meets all required elements and is ready to be graded.	0 pts Ineligible for Grading Assignment is missing at least one required element and is not ready to be graded. Please contact your teacher.		
Response to Prompt Writing should focus on the prompt	1 pts Full Credit Writing fully addresses the instructions in the prompt	0.5 pts Half Credit Writing does not fully address the instructions in the prompt	0 pts No Credit Writing does not address the instructions in the prompt, or the assignment was not submitted	
Revision Assignment shows evidence of revision	1 pts Full Credit Writing shows clear, substantial evidence of revision and editing (e.g., adding or deleting passages; replacing words or phrases for more precise meaning or to suit the genre; restructuring phrases, clauses, sentences, or paragraphs)	0.5 pts Half Credit Writing shows only some surface-level editing (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization) and not substantial revision	0 pts No Credit Writing shows no evidence of revision or editing or the assignment was not submitted	

Student Engagement and Instructor Reflections

Because the writing assignment is quick to grade, instructors have more time to spend on qualitative feedback, highlighting improvements that the student made and offering suggestions for future writing. Some critics of labor-based grading fear that students will not be sufficiently challenged without the focus on working for a letter grade. In fact, students become challenged by the activity itself rather than by the grade. Students are motivated to try new things, to take risks, and to re-envision their work through the revision process. The heightened motivation and risk-taking can lead to greater learning and writing growth.

Every semester, instructors of this English 101M course note substantial changes in both student writing and the students as writers. Instructors identify an evolution in the quality of student revision, progressing from minor edits at the beginning of the term to broader modifications, including adding, deleting, and restructuring large sections of text in later assignments. When students revise two large projects for their final portfolios, they frequently take bigger risks. They make deeper connections between ideas and attempt more complex vocabulary and sentence structures, particularly for transitions between and within paragraphs. By the end of the semester, animated group discussions, laughter, and earnest peer review reflect a new level of engagement with the writing process. When students talk about their new habit of keeping a daily journal or their goal of publishing a memoir, they appear to be taking not just their work but also themselves, as writers, more seriously.

Extending Labor-Based Grading to Other L2 Contexts

Labor-based grading can be used in the teaching of any subject, as long as the instructor’s goal is to recognize effort and improvements rather than a “perfect” product or “mastery” of a skill. It is particularly well suited for

courses where culminating assignments are scaffolded and where revision is seen as an integral part of the learning process.

In a class of newcomers aged 11-12 at the A2 level, a culminating assignment might be a poster presentation of the student's support network. Activities leading up to this culminating assignment could include (1) write a journal entry about your best friend, (2) create a digital or paper "photo album" of family members and describe your relatives to a classmate, and (3) compose a story about a time someone helped you and then share it orally in small groups. Each of these initial activities can serve as inspiration for the final poster. Encouraging students to include a reflection with their final poster on how they modified ideas, vocabulary, and grammar from their earlier assignments reinforces the importance of revision. Not only is such a reflection a means of ensuring students are purposeful in the revision of their work, but it is also a way for students to celebrate their own learning and growth as writers.

Adult learners at the B1 level could explore the question: What makes you stronger? Activities or entire units could address physical strength (e.g., readings on nutrition and videos about exercise), emotional resilience (e.g., storytelling about family and friends), and intellectual aptitude (e.g., writing a resume highlighting special skills, training, job experience, holding mock job interviews). After exploring the many ways in which we become stronger, students can choose individually how to present their final project, for instance as a letter written to the instructor, as a college admissions essay, or as a video. Alternatively, the instructor may prefer to require a challenging new mode for the students, such as a slide presentation or an infographic, if building job skills is an objective of the course. Again, the students should receive guidance on how to incorporate ideas and feedback from earlier assignments into their final project. An end-of-semester reflection might ask students to take one assignment from the beginning of the term and compare it to the work developed at the end of the term.

These two examples illustrate how labor-based grading can be used outside of the university composition classroom and also how to integrate accountability into the curriculum. Students' language proficiency grows when they have the opportunity and impetus to stretch and to push themselves. Language development occurs when students communicate in a new genre or for a new purpose; learning also takes place when students are asked to revise, rework, or re-envision an assignment that they had deemed "good enough" during the first iteration. The question for them becomes: How can you make good enough better? How can you grow even more as a writer or, more generally, as a language user?

Discussion: Labor-Based Grading, Process Pedagogy, and L2 Writing Assessment

Although situated within a particular institutional and classroom setting, the pedagogical framework outlined here carries wider significance for L2 writing instruction, assessment practices, and future lines of inquiry. This work contributes to ongoing discussions in L2 writing scholarship concerning the intersections of process-oriented pedagogy, assessment, and educational equity.

For decades, research in composition studies and second language writing has foregrounded the importance of revision, recursive composing, and metacognitive engagement (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Murray, 1972). In contrast, assessment practices have often lagged behind these pedagogical commitments, continuing to privilege final products. Our observations suggest that this disconnect is experienced by students not merely as an abstract contradiction, but as a practical tension. Although effort, revision, and development are emphasized throughout instruction, grades tend to rest on judgments of the final text alone, sending conflicting signals about what is valued.

Labor-based grading offers a means of addressing this misalignment by more closely aligning assessment with process-focused teaching. In the course discussed in this article, grades are not intended to sort students according to predetermined standards of correctness or proficiency, but to acknowledge and encourage sustained participation, revision practices, and rhetorical growth. Labor-based grading operates not only as an alternative grading system, but as a pedagogical intervention that reframes students' relationships with writing. Writing is no longer positioned as a performance subject to scrutiny for correctness, but as an ongoing, activity in which learning takes shape through reflection, experimentation, and revision.

Our observations complement existing research on writing self-efficacy and motivation, particularly in terms of lowered anxiety, greater risk-taking, and increased student agency. Other studies have shown that writers are more likely to engage deeply and persist when tasks are perceived as meaningful and when assessment practices support their identities as writers (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Pajares & Valiante, 1997). Our classroom observations extend this work by offering an assessment structure that enacts these principles in practice. This grading

framework systematically lowers the stakes associated with linguistic error and redirects attention toward process-based objectives.

The framework also addresses long-standing concerns about linguistic bias and fairness in writing assessment. As Inoue (2015, 2022) and others have argued, conventional notions of “good writing” are often rooted in dominant language norms that marginalize multilingual writers. By shifting emphasis away from instructor-determined quality judgments and toward labor, revision, and rhetorical awareness, the grading approach limits the degree to which nonstandard writing is penalized during instruction. Of course, this shift does not neglect language development. Instead, grammar, vocabulary, and clarity are addressed through feedback and revision cycles, where error is normalized as a generative aspect of learning rather than as a marker of deficiency.

At the same time, we acknowledge critiques of labor-based grading. As Carillo (2021) notes, labor itself is not a neutral metric, since students’ capacity to invest time and effort is shaped beyond the classroom by social, economic, and institutional factors. Our design choices—such as transparent expectations, opportunities for revision, and explicit instruction in revision practices—are intended to mitigate these concerns, though they cannot fully resolve them. Grading should not be understood as a universally applicable solution, but as one assessment ecology among many, whose value depends on intentional design and sustained reflection.

This article is relevant to contemporary debates surrounding generative AI in L2 writing classrooms. As anxiety about AI-assisted writing grows, assessment models that value polished end products may unintentionally increase incentives for students to rely on external tools. In contrast, labor-based grading foregrounds process, revision trajectories, and rhetorical choices—dimensions of writing that are less easily outsourced and more closely aligned with instructional goals. In doing so, the assessment model described here aligns with emerging calls to address AI through pedagogical approaches that emphasize transparency, engagement, and development (Council of Writing Program Administrators et al., 2023) rather than through strict prohibition.

Finally, this framework highlights the need for further research on labor-based grading in L2 contexts. Longitudinal studies across courses, comparisons of hybrid and other non-traditional grading models, and empirical research on how assessment shapes students’ use of AI tools would deepen understanding of how alternative grading practices operate across institutional settings.

Conclusion

For instructors who espouse a process rather than a product approach to writing and learning, labor-based grading is a pedagogically consistent form of assessment. It emphasizes effort and growth and recognizes the elusiveness of perfection. Even after multiple drafts, a final product can always be further improved. Continuing to dwell on a handful of errors is frustrating for both student and instructor. Labor-based grading does not dismiss errors as entirely unimportant; rather, it acknowledges errors as a natural part of the learning process. In fact, labor-based grading creates an environment where students are encouraged to learn from error and to develop language use more broadly (e.g., improving concision), not because students want at all costs an “A,” but because they are invested in the activity in which they are engaged and are eager to learn and accomplish more.

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