

The 1-4 Scale and Conversion Sheet

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Three is the target, not four. Everything else on this sheet follows from that.

The four levels

LEVEL	NAME	WHAT IT MEANS — STUDENT-FACING WORDING
4	Exceeding	You consistently go beyond what the standard asks. This is different work, not tidier work. Having few 4s is normal.
3	Meeting — the goal	You consistently do what the standard asks. This is success. It is not a consolation prize and it is not a B.
2	Approaching	You do some of what the standard asks. You are partway, and you can usually name the part that is missing.
1	Below	Not yet. This is a signal that something has to change now — a re-teach, a conference, another attempt that counts.

Three conversion approaches

APPROACH	WHAT IT DISTORTS
Direct map — 4=A, 3=B, 2=C, 1=D	Tells every proficient student they are a B student. Demoralising, and not what a 3 means.
Weighted map — 3=A or A–, top reserved for consistent 4s	Fixes the message, then compresses everything below proficient into very little room.
Decision rules — an A needs 3s on all standards and 4s on some	Most defensible. Hardest to fit on a progress report or explain in a hallway.
Averaging the levels (2, 3, 3 → 2.67)	Everything. Rebuilds the false precision the scale was adopted to remove, and penalises students who improved.

Instead of averaging

RULE	USE IT WHEN
Most recent evidence	The standard is one skill practised repeatedly and improvement is the point.
Mode (most common level)	There is a lot of evidence and one outlier should not swing the result.
Professional judgement, pattern visible	Always available, always requires you to be able to say why in one sentence.

Before the term starts

- ☐ The department has agreed **in writing** what a 3 means for each standard.
- ☐ The conversion rule is published to students and families — in September, not in May.

- ☐ We know what our gradebook does by default, and whether it silently averages.
- ☐ Someone has modelled what this does to the **GPA distribution**.
- ☐ Students will see the level on returned work, whatever the portal displays.
- ☐ A 1 or a 2 triggers something — a re-teach, a conference, a second attempt that counts.
- ☐ An hour a term is booked for **moderation**: the department marking the same work and arguing.
- ☐ We convert the body of evidence once, at the end — never assignment by assignment.

The one-paragraph explanation to send home

This course reports on a four-point scale. A **3 means your child is meeting the grade-level standard** — that is the goal, and it is what success looks like in this class. A 4 means work that goes beyond the standard; it is a different kind of task rather than a neater version of the same one, and most students earn few of them over a year. A 2 means partway there, and a 1 means not yet — both are signals that we will do something about, not permanent marks.

Levels describe where a student is *now*, based on recent evidence, rather than an average of everything they have submitted. A student who struggled in September and is meeting the standard in November is meeting the standard.

Why four levels and not a hundred. With a pass mark near 60, roughly two-thirds of a 100-point scale describes gradations of failing. Asked to mark one paper, 90 trained high-school teachers produced scores from 50 to 96. And recovering from a single zero in a percentage system takes a perfect score on at least nine other assignments. Fewer levels is not a simplification — it is a correction. (Source: Thomas Guskey, *The Case Against Percentage Grades*.)