

Partial Credit: Friend or Frankenstein?

Maintaining High Standards While Fostering Student Growth

Reasons TO Allow Partial Credit

- Encourages students to keep trying
- Strong incentive for students to organize written work
- Concepts are more important than computation
- Students like it, expect it
- Graders learn more about students
- Helps instructor's grade distribution
- Makes the grader feel good

Reasons NOT to Allow Partial Credit

- Potentially devastating results in the real world
- Computation is just as important as conceptual work
- Strong incentive to double-check work
- False representation to student
- False representation to future instructors
- Likelihood of inequity and inconsistency
- ...but it makes grading easy!

Things Instructors Can Do

- Decide on partial credit points *before* grading.
- No partial credit for core objective errors (*possible exceptions: very new or very difficult objectives*)
- Limited (or no?) partial credit for recent objective errors
- Consider partial credit for tertiary errors (*unless offensive*)
- Grade all page 1's, then all page 2's, etc. for consistency
- Comments without penalty are instructive, too!

Things Students Can Do

- Make your strategy clear to the reader; include words!
- Write what you *would* do if you weren't stuck.
- Rely on what makes sense, not what you remember
- Maintain concentration for the entire problem
- Practice excellence on homework
- Pay attention to the directions & notation
- Apply the "sniff test" to answers

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