

# FIVE WAYS TO BEAT LOW GPA BLUES

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Does your grade point average really give prospective employers an accurate picture of your abilities and potential? You may want to shout, “NO!” and many people would agree with you. There is no point in debating whether employers should judge candidates by their GPA. Right or wrong, employers will judge you by it. So if your GPA is lower than you like, you have some strategizing to do before you embark on your job or internship search.

## Don't Mention Your GPA

There is no law that says you have to include your GPA on your resume or talk about it during interviews. So if you have a low GPA, and nobody outright asks you about it, let it go. Talk about your many strengths instead. Even if you don't bring up the topic, however, be prepared for it to emerge at some point. If and when it does, consider one of these strategies.

## Play Up Your Major GPA

You might be one of the many students who are far more interested in your major courses than your general/core courses, and who thus does better in the former and worse in the latter. In this case, talk about your major GPA on your resume and in interviews. Or at the very least, discuss both your major GPA and your cumulative GPA. This approach serves a dual purpose: It puts your cumulative GPA in its proper context, and it shows employers you are capable of earning good grades if you are studying something that engages you.

## Calculate Your GPA for a Selected Time Span

Suppose, for example, your grades were terrible freshman year and only improved enough sophomore year for you to stay in school. Then junior year, you got serious and began performing much better academically.

Your cumulative GPA at graduation might not truly reflect how well you did in your classes during your junior and senior years, and even your major GPA might not tell the whole story. So consider calculating your GPA for your last four semesters in school, then sell that number to prospective employers. “Like many freshman, I struggled with the transition to college-level academic work,” you might say to an interviewer. “But as you can see from my GPA for my junior and senior years, I learned how to become a high-performing student.”

## Retake Troublesome Courses

At most institutions, you have the option of retaking courses that didn't go well for you the first time. If you do better the second time, only the second grade is used to calculate your GPA. Obviously, retaking a course impacts your finances, time and energy. But if it helps you pull up your GPA to a point where employers will give it more respect, then it is probably worth the investment in the long run.

## Market Yourself in Person

Many employers, when reading through recent college graduates' resumes, use the GPA to weed people out. You have probably even seen job or internship listings that note a required GPA of at least 3.25. If your GPA does not meet the standards employers are seeking, you will have difficulty making a case for yourself on paper alone. So it will be critical for you to find ways to talk to employers in person. Join a professional organization in your field and start attending its meetings. Do some informational interviewing so you can meet

people in your field, and they can get to know you as a real person, not just a GPA number. The more you can sell your whole self in person, the less impact a low GPA will have on your internship and job prospects.

Visit: <http://hotjobs.yahoo.com/> (click on *Career Tools* in the menu bar) for additional career search topics.

## Calculating Your Grade Point Average

Here are the steps to take in calculating your grade point average.

1. List your courses, the grade you received in each course, and the credits for each course. Then multiply the course credits by the grade value for each course (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0).

Example

Course	Credits	Grade	Grade Value	Grade Points
Psychology	3	B	3	9
History	3	C	2	6
Biology	4	B	3	12
Algebra	4	A	4	16
Speech	2	D	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>			<b>45</b>

2. Total the number of credits you completed and the number of grade points and divide the total number of grade points you earned by the total number of credits. Round your answer to the nearest hundredth (.01).

TOTAL NUMBER OF CREDITS = 16

TOTAL GRADE POINTS = 45

AVERAGE = 2.815 (45 divided by 16)

This student's average for this semester would be 2.815 or 2.82.

3. To calculate your cumulative grade point average, add all the credits for all semesters and all the grade points for all the semesters. Then divide the cumulative total grade points by the cumulative total credits.

Exercise

Figure each semester GPA and then the cumulative GPA for this student.

Semester 1			Semester 2		
Course	Credits	Grade	Course	Credits	Grade
English	3	B	Pre-calc	4	D
Chemistry	5	C	Philosophy	3	C
Economics	3	A	Drawing I	2	B
Chorus	1	A	Physics	4	F
Business	3	B	Music	3	B

Answer:

Semester 1 GPA = 2.93    Semester 2 GPA = 1.56    Cumulative GPA = 2.23

For more information on the above and/or study tips contact University Counseling Services,  
220 Royce Hall, 342-1865, [www.uwplatt.edu/counseling](http://www.uwplatt.edu/counseling)