

Guidelines for Homework Grades

If you choose to assign and grade the homework provided, do so based on participation/effort. If students choose to turn in homework without at least following directions (i.e. writing fewer than two separate sentences relevant to their answer to the question), give partial credit.

In class discussion, the students may feel pressure to agree with the instructor and their colleagues that there is clear evidence for a sixth major mass extinction. Given a little time and privacy to consider what they have learned, students may have some doubts, and need an opportunity to express those without risking being "wrong". The purpose of the homework is to get the students to think back on the information that they have been presented with and to let them draw and express their own conclusions. The homework is also useful to the instructor because it may allow the students to reveal misconceptions or biases that will influence their future learning of this and related subjects. The instructor could tailor future lessons to address student misconceptions.

Instructors who wish instead to determine which factual details of the lesson the students retain after they leave class should design their own homework assignment. In this case, use questions about the content of the lesson that can be answered correctly or incorrectly (like the ones on a reading quiz) rather than the open-ended assignment provided here. Alternatively, some short-essay factual questions and a rubric for scoring them are listed in the Assessment section of the module.