Grading

In professional football, there is a replay rule. If you think a referee has made an incorrect call, you can ask that the tape be replayed. If you are right, there is no penalty. If you are wrong, however, you pay by losing a timeout. This helps move the game along as well as remove the temptation to badger the refs for reconsideration.

I wish we could impose the replay rule. As an instructor, I just don't have the time to regrade everything. It is just too time consuming, but more importantly it isn't fair. Let me explain. Some students will pester the instructor for absolutely every point that was lost, regardless of the justification. Students that do that routinely often get undeserved points just because the instructor is tired of arguing about points. This is unfair to the students who don't make a nuisance of themselves. When I am grading and I see a mistake, I must assign a point value to the mistake. It is personal decision how I count it. Mistakes aren't linear in nature. You just have to assign a point value to them. It could be that one of several decisions would be perfectly reasonable, BUT after you do make a decision and grade all the class tests based on that criteria, you can't change one persons score just because they think a different point distribution would have been more appropriate. It isn't fair to the rest of the class.

If there has been a mistake, I want you to point it out to me. But asking that every single question you missed be regraded, wastes both your time and mine and will not result in increased points. In addition, it disadvantages you in the future when you come to me with a genuine concern. I become so used to discounting your pleas, that a real concern might be discounted as well.

In addition, I do not have time to go through your entire test explaining what the answer should have been. Read the textbook. Read the posted solution. If you still can't understand what the answer should have been, then see me.

Some semesters have been particularly bad for students hounding the graders for more points. Previous graders have complained about the exact same thing. One grader said, "I don't know why anyone would want this job. It is so stressful. I spend hours grading and then students argue every point. They say, 'Three points is so many. Why did you take off so many?' Or they say, 'You took off for quality. How could mine have been better?' I have graded the whole class. I am grading them with respect to all the others. I don't have time to show them ten other outputs for them to realize how they could have been better."

Please consider the following:

1. Hours have been spent grading an assignment or test. Please respect the investment that has been made on your behalf.
2. Grading is to help you learn. Use it as a learning experience.
3. Arguing for points just to improve your grade (rather than to gain understanding) is inappropriate. The few points you may earn are insignificant compared to the poor reputation you are earning.
4. Unless there has been a mistake made, scores will not be adjusted.
5. You are graded on the answer you write, not what you meant. No one can read your mind. You are graded on the assignment you turned in. Take time to study the requirements. Your boss
won't be impressed that you can fix the mistake in 10 minutes. Getting it right on the second or third time just isn't as good as getting it right the first time.

6. If you feel that there has been a mistake made, put your concerns in writing and turn it in with the exam or homework within a week. Be careful, however. Many times a person asking for more points merely confirms that a lower grade is warranted as they don't even understand why their answer is incorrect after it has been explained to them.

7. Indicating that you need a particular grade to stay in the program or because you have worked so hard has no effect. Everybody is working hard. Everybody needs good grades for a variety of reasons. It is offensive when you assume that the instructor will give you a particular grade just because you need it. This violates all concept of fairness.

8. In our culture, there is a phrase ``Pick your battles." Quoting from some unknown source on the web: Save your energy for the important battles. It takes a strong ego to not try and win every minor point, but it works better in the long run.

Moreover, trying to win every minor point is rhetorically risky. Most people have a disdain for those who will say anything to win an argument. You may do more damage to long term relationships than it is worth. You may win the battle but lose the war. You are distancing the very people who are in the best position to help you professionally.

Don't be a Chronic Complainer.

Social activist and author Jonathan Kozol said, ``Pick battles big enough to matter, and small enough to win.'"