***Q: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Grades encourage students to learn. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion." (question from the***[***Official TOEFL Guide***](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ)***)***

As modern education continues to develop, the usefulness of grades as a form of assessment **has been called into question**.  Personally, though, I believe that grades do encourage students to learn.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, grades motivate students to **approach their studies in a deep and meaningful fashion**.  When a student feels that his grades are **on the line**, he will spend more time working on his assignments and will therefore absorb more information and comprehension.  On the other hand, students who do not have to worry about their grades will achieve merely a superficial understanding of the topics they are studying.  My own experience as a student demonstrates convincing evidence of this. **During my sophomore year** I was assigned a major presentation in a classical studies seminar which I was a member of.  The assignment made up about half of my total grade in the class, so I approached my work with diligence and care.  I wrote a compelling speech and spent hours  preparing for every possible question that my classmates might have.  If the presentation had not been graded, I would not have worked  so hard in preparing it.  Just like me, students all over the world today are motivated to work hard by the chance to achieve high grades in their classes.

Secondly, grades motivate students because they **serve as an objective measurement of our knowledge**.  Grades are assigned in a systematic way and they clearly demonstrate which students in a class are the best and brightest.  As a result, in classes where grades are given, students will **strive to succeed** so that they can set themselves apart from their peers.  For example, **in my freshman year** I took a “pass/fail”  course in  literature.  Since only a moderate amount of effort was required to pass the class, I completed my assignments and presentations with only a slight amount of care and effort.  In contrast, when I took a graded class on the same subject in my junior year I spent hours in the library researching my papers so that I could show my professors that I was intellectually superior to my classmates.  This may **appear somewhat shallow**,  but in today’s competitive academic environment it is absolutely necessary for students to distinguish themselves.  This demonstrates another way in which grades motivate students to **excel**.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that grades encourage students to learn.  This is because they force students to approach their studies with enthusiasm and diligence, and because they give young learners a way to distinguish themselves from their peers.