Advanced Testing: Enabling strong test parameters

Contents of Module

A. Use Question Pools
B. Randomize Questions and Answers
C. Limit Test Results and Feedback
D. Set a Timer
E. Display Questions one-at-a-time
F. The 101 on Force Completion
G. Other FAQs

Unless students are completing the online test while located in a proctored test center, there is no way to know who is taking the test or if they are taking it alone. No purely online assessment system can prevent all forms of cheating. Unless you are giving the test as a proctored computer lab test, you should consider Blackboard assessments tantamount to a take-home exam or open book exam. However, online quizzes are very good for keeping students up with reading and self-checking their knowledge of a subject.

Although it may be difficult to prevent cheating entirely, faculty can use these practical tips to minimize the opportunities for cheating during online tests in Blackboard.

A. Use Question Pools

Create Question Pools to define multiple questions that can be randomly included in tests. Rather than using a fixed number of items that remain unchanged for each administration of the test, consider creating a question pool. Questions can be grouped by any number of criteria, including topic, subject matter, question type or difficulty of question.

A pool will generate an assessment with randomized questions selected by the faculty member. Pools can be created from new questions or questions in existing tests or pools. Pools are most effective when there are large numbers of questions in one group. For example, one might have a pool of true/false questions, another of multiple choice and a third for fill in the blank. The faculty member could then create an assessment drawing a specific number of questions from each of the question-type pools. Faculty can also add new questions to pools each time the course is taught to expand the variability of questions. Conversely, older questions can be removed.

Build a test with a question pool

There are four overall steps in creating a test by searching pools and assessments:

- Build the test
- Specify the Question Settings
- Search for questions from pools or assessments, or a combination of the two
Add the questions

Some of these steps are similar to routine test creation; we will focus on the differences.

1. In the Course Content area, follow the steps to create a test. Go to **Assessments > Test**

2. On the Create Test page, select **Create**.

3. Enter the test name, description and instructions. Click **Submit**.

4. On the Test Canvas page, click the Reuse Question drop-down list. Select **Find Questions**.

5. On the Find Question Mode page, select to either **Copy** selected questions (to create a new instance of a question) or **Link to original questions**.

5. On the Find Questions page, search a question or select the Pools, Tests, Question types, Categories, Topics, Levels of Difficulty, Keywords or combinations to search.
6. Use the Browse Criteria column to limit your search:
   - Expand the Pools, Tests, or Question types by clicking the down arrow icon.
   - Expand the Categories heading by clicking the down arrow icon.
   - Expand the Topics heading by clicking the down arrow icon.
   - Expand the Levels of Difficulty heading by clicking the down arrow icon.
   - Expand the Keywords heading by clicking the down arrow icon.

7. Choose your selection criteria by checking parameters of interest. Those questions that meet the search criteria will appear in the Criteria Summary area of the screen.

8. Check each checkbox for a question you want to add to the test. (NOTE: The Mode column will signify how the question is to be added to the test.)

9. Click **Submit** to add the selected questions to the test.

10. You are returned to the Test Canvas page and the selected questions are added to the test.

11. To Assign, Edit, or Change the points for a question, just enter a new point value into the Points cell.
You can also change all points at once using the “Select: All” and “Update” features.

B. Randomize Questions and Answers

Questions

Use Random Blocks of questions to be sure that each student receives a different version of the test.

When creating a test in Blackboard, one test option allows faculty to randomize the selection of test questions as well as the order in which they appear. The result is that students are not likely to get the same questions in the same sequence when taking a test. This strategy can address the issue of students who take a test at the same time in order to share answers. This is also relevant if faculty allow students to repeat the test. Each time this occurs, a test will be made up of questions that are randomly selected and ordered.

1. From the Test Canvas page, go to Reuse Question > Create Random Block.

2. To create a random block, browse and select a source pool and at least one question type. The questions matching your criteria will be shown in the right panel.
3. When done, click **Submit** to create the random block on your Test Canvas.

![Submit button](image)

4. The points per question and number of questions to use out of the block are set on the Test Canvas.

   Points: **10**

**Answers**

Randomize the order in which answers appear for each question. You have the option to select randomize answers with each individual question that you create as you build your test. If your test is already built, you can always enable this feature with the on the “Edit Test” page of your test.

**C. Limit Test Results and Feedback**

Limit what types of feedback is displayed to students upon completion of a test. Available test options include test ‘Score’, ‘Submitted Answers’, ‘Correct Answers’, and ‘Feedback’.

![Feedback options](image)

**NOTE:** Providing test scores is important feedback that indicates how well students have performed and should be made available. However, through a process of elimination, students may be able to determine the correct answer for each test question if their submitted answers are identified as incorrect, or if the correct answer is provided. Students could lose the incentive to both prepare for testing or to seek out correct answers by reviewing lecture notes, assigned readings, or through group discussion after completing tests. Thus, faculty might reconsider whether to include ‘Submitted Answers’ as an option to be displayed to students. This is especially relevant if faculty have allowed students to repeat tests. Each time a test was taken, students could attempt a different answer for a test question that was previously graded as incorrect. Correct answers to all test questions could eventually be accumulated and passed on to other students, or to students of future classes.
**Can I configure a test or quiz to show students feedback but NOT the correct answers?**

Unfortunately, in the current version of Blackboard, this is not possible. The only way to automatically display feedback to students immediately after they complete a test or quiz is to also allow them to see the detailed results and correct answers.

**D. Set a Timer**

Recognizing the fact that students taking an exam that is not proctored are free to use open book/notes, faculty may decide to use the ‘Set Timer’ feature in Blackboard. Students who adequately prepared for a test may be less likely to rely on open book/notes compared with students unprepared for testing. By setting a test with an expected completion time, unprepared students could have the most to lose as they spend time going over material, and risk not having sufficient time to respond to all the test questions.

Set a Timer to specify the number of hours and minutes that students will have to complete the test.

- **Set Timer**
  - Minutes: 30
  - Auto-Submit: OFF

During a timed test, the time elapsed is displayed to students.

- **Remaining Time:** 14 minutes, 58 seconds.

If you set the timer, you can then turn on Auto-Submit to automatically save and submit a test when time expires.

- **Set Timer**
  - Minutes: 15
  - Auto-Submit: OFF

Without enabling auto-submit, students have the option to continue after time expires; the instructor can then review which students exceeded the time limit.

**E. Display Questions One-at-a-time**

If a test has more than five questions, do not choose the ‘All at Once’ option for displaying all the questions on the same screen.
It is quite easy for students to take a screen capture of the displayed questions and share them with other students. While students can still screen capture pages with single questions, or even type them into a document, it is more time consuming and unwieldy.

F. The 101 on Force Completion

This is a setting for a test that forces the student to complete the test attempt in one sitting. Students clicking on any other part of the Blackboard course will be warned that they are exiting the test and the test will be submitted. If students accidentally close their browsers, click another link in the Blackboard course, or lose power or their internet connections, they cannot continue with that test attempt. They must contact the instructor to allow them to start the test over with a new attempt.

You may find it advantageous to use the Set Timer option and not the Force Completion option. For example, if a student loses their internet connection for 10 minutes on a timed test, at least they can access the test again and continue. If you enabled the Forced Completion option, the student cannot access the test again and must contact you to reset the test.

G. Other FAQs

Can I change the Test after students have started taking it?

Yes, this is possible. You can edit questions, delete questions, reorder questions or change the point value of questions. You cannot add questions. After making the changes to the Test and clicking the Submit/Delete and Regrade button, the Test will automatically re-grade any Tests that have already been completed and will use the updated Test for all future attempts of the Test.

Can I print out a Test?

The only way to print out a Test is to use the Print Screen option on your computer.

How can I tell if a student opened my Test?

If the student opened the Test but did not submit it, there will be an Attempt In Progress icon in the Grade Center in the Test column for that student.

Loading...