

Giving Tests in Blackboard

The testing feature in Blackboard is both robust and complex. This guide will give you recommendations from E-Learning Services regarding the creation and deployment of your test.

For the best testing experience:

- Set your tests with fewer than 25 questions to show questions all on one page, or one at a time.
- Set tests with more than 25 questions to show one at a time.
- Create separate exams for essay questions in order to avoid browser timeout issues.
- Set a time frame of at least 24 hours for students to take the test, but also use the timer set to an appropriate length.
- Consider using the Multiple Attempts option so that students can re-enter a test if they get kicked out, but do caution them on how you will score the test (e.g., by taking the Last Attempt).
- Encourage your students to use the Firefox browser for taking tests in Blackboard. Please refer your class to the Blackboard Support for Students webpage (www.nnu.edu/bbstudents) for a link.

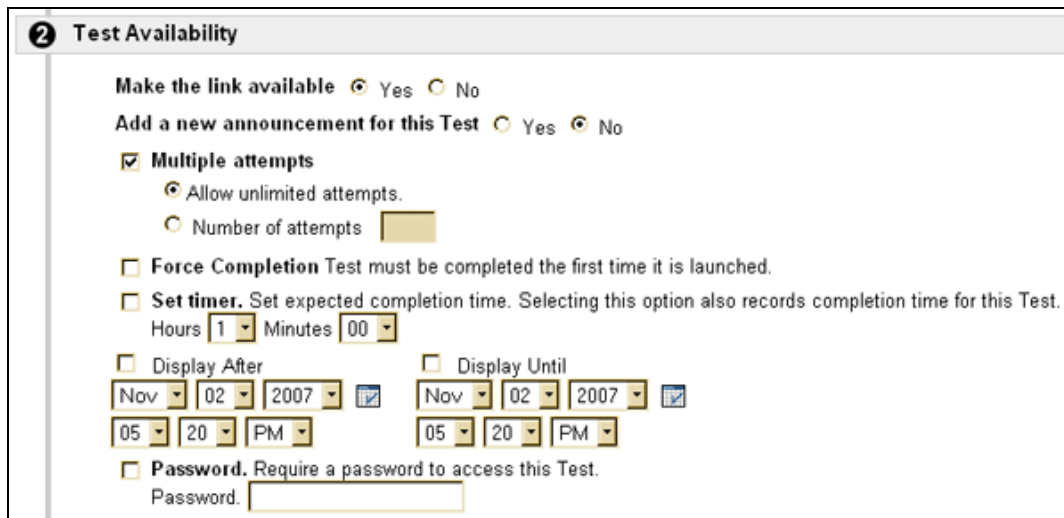
Creating the Test

Vary your questions – Create discrete pools of like items, so you can randomize within the pools to address content validity. Using pools and random blocks will also help to ensure that no two students get the same exam.

Consider a publisher's test bank – Visit Blackboard's Course Cartridge Catalog at <http://cartridgecatalog.blackboard.com/search.aspx> to see if your textbook publisher has a test bank of questions that can be imported into Blackboard.

Deploying the Test

Test Availability Options



The screenshot shows the 'Test Availability' configuration page in Blackboard. It includes the following options:

- Make the link available:** Radio buttons for 'Yes' (selected) and 'No'.
- Add a new announcement for this Test:** Radio buttons for 'Yes' and 'No' (selected).
- Multiple attempts:** A checked checkbox. Sub-options include 'Allow unlimited attempts.' (selected) and 'Number of attempts' (input field).
- Force Completion:** A checkbox with the text 'Test must be completed the first time it is launched.'
- Set timer:** A checkbox with the text 'Set expected completion time. Selecting this option also records completion time for this Test.' Below it are 'Hours' (1) and 'Minutes' (00) dropdown menus.
- Display After:** A checkbox with date and time dropdowns (Nov 02 2007 05:20 PM).
- Display Until:** A checkbox with date and time dropdowns (Nov 02 2007 05:20 PM).
- Password:** A checkbox with the text 'Require a password to access this Test.' and a 'Password' input field.

Availability – Enable the availability option to make the test link available. Students will not be able to see the test until you enable this option. If you use Display Dates, you'll still set this to available.

Announcement – If you choose to add a new announcement for the test, be aware that a generic announcement is created but you can customize it. Alternately, create your own announcement with a course link to the exam.

Multiple Attempts – This option is especially helpful when you want students to master the content. You can choose in the Gradebook whether to keep the best score, last score, an average of all attempts, etc. Blackboard will note in the instructions that the test is set for Multiple Attempts.

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Force Completion – Students will be required to complete the exam once the test begins. Blackboard will note in the instructions that students will not be able to save the test and come back to it later. Do NOT use Force Completion and randomization in the same test. E-Learning Services recommends using the timer feature rather than Force Completion.

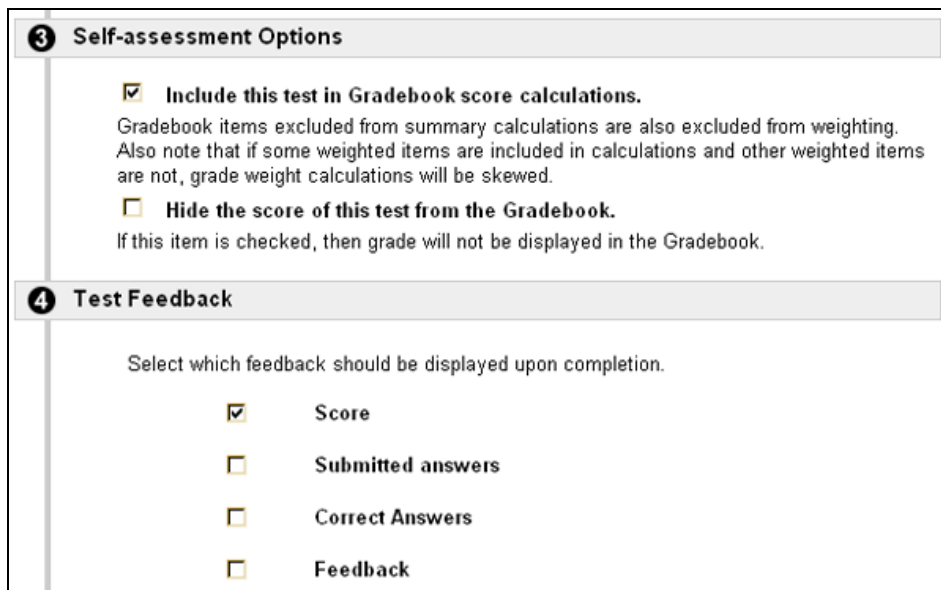
Timer – If you choose the “set timer” option, Blackboard will note in the instructions how long the test timer will be and that students will see a 1-minute warning. A student can continue taking the exam beyond the set time limit; however, you will be able to see on the student’s exam how many minutes/seconds over the designated time the student took prior to submitting his/her answers.

Display Dates – The display after/until options allow you to time when the test link will be available to students. If you choose to use this option when teaching a class online, be sure to keep the window open for at least 24 to 48 hours and let students know well in advance when the test will be available so they can contact you if there is a scheduling conflict.

If you will be testing students in a traditional course, you may still want to use a window of time. Either way, try to stagger the times when students actually start the test; Blackboard’s testing feature can be overstressed when more than, say, 10 students start a test in the exact same minute.

Password – This may be more helpful in lab settings than online, but either way, its use can help prevent cheating.

Self-Assessment and Feedback Options



The screenshot shows two sections of a Blackboard interface. The first section, titled '3 Self-assessment Options', contains two checkboxes. The first checkbox, 'Include this test in Gradebook score calculations.', is checked. Below it is a note: 'Gradebook items excluded from summary calculations are also excluded from weighting. Also note that if some weighted items are included in calculations and other weighted items are not, grade weight calculations will be skewed.' The second checkbox, 'Hide the score of this test from the Gradebook.', is unchecked. Below it is a note: 'If this item is checked, then grade will not be displayed in the Gradebook.' The second section, titled '4 Test Feedback', contains the instruction 'Select which feedback should be displayed upon completion.' followed by four checkboxes: 'Score' (checked), 'Submitted answers' (unchecked), 'Correct Answers' (unchecked), and 'Feedback' (unchecked).

Self-Assessment – Many students, especially adult learners, appreciate opportunities to gain confidence in what they are learning. If the exam is a “self-check” for understanding (which may or may not count toward the final course grade) or contains questions you want students to master, consider using the Multiple Attempts option. Uncheck the option to “Include this test in Gradebook score calculations” if you do not want the self-check quiz to count toward the final course grade. If you choose to also “Hide the score,” it will truly be hidden from you.

Feedback – Each feedback option is mutually exclusive and can be selected independently of the others. If you include essay questions on the test, be aware that because essay questions must be graded manually, a score will not be reported back to students even if the Score feedback option is selected.

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Presentation Options

5 Test Presentation

Presentation Mode

All at Once Present the entire Test on one screen.

One at a Time Present one question at a time.

Prohibit Backtracking Prevent changing the answer to a question that has already been submitted.

Randomize Questions. Randomize questions for each Test attempt.

All at Once – All of the questions appear on one Web page. Each question has a Save button so students can periodically save their answers, or they may choose to scroll down to the bottom of the page periodically to click the Save button there. Doing so should help protect students in case of technical difficulties.

If you elect to show questions “all at once,” break up the test into multiple exams if there are more than 20-25 questions. Also, if there are a few essay questions, consider creating a separate exam since answers to these questions can take a considerable amount of time to answer. Suggest that students compose answers to essay questions in a Rich Text Editor such as Wordpad or Notepad and then copy/paste their answers into Blackboard.

NOTE: Caution students to wait for all questions to load before beginning to answer. We also recommend that you advise students to disable the Visual Text Box Editor before taking a test, as it can sometimes cause excessively slow scrolling.

One at a Time – Questions appear one by one as students click a forward arrow. The advantage to this option is that clicking the arrow automatically saves each question as students advance, but this type of test takes more time to complete because the answers to each question are submitted individually.

You may want to inform students about using the Question Completion Status; they may keep track of which questions they have answered by clicking the small, upside down triangle immediately below the test instructions.

Backtracking Prohibited – This is yet another option you may use to help prevent cheating.

Randomizing – This is best used in a lab setting or when you are using Multiple Attempts. Each attempt displays questions in a randomized order; however, do not use this option if you have questions that build on one another or if one or more questions depends on previously asked questions.

Writing Instructions to Students

Provide a link to the Blackboard Test-Taking Guide and instruct students to review it before taking the exam in order to avoid potential problems:

http://www.nnu.edu/fileadmin/content/academicresources/it/bb_files/BbAssess_TestTakingGuide.pdf

Directions should specify:

- What exam conditions are allowed (e.g., whether the exam is open book/open notes, whether calculators may or may not be used, whether students can collaborate on the exam, etc.)
- Whether the test is timed and if so, how much time students will have to complete the exam
- How many and what kinds of questions are included (multiple choice, essay, etc.)
- Whether the exam is password protected and how students will receive the password
- The timeframe/week in which the exam can be taken
- How many points the exam is worth
- A word of caution to avoid problems (e.g., “Remember not to click the Back button”) and how to contact you and/or the Technical Response Center if students do experience anomalies

You may want to include this information in a separate item directly above the test, and use Adaptive Release with Review Status to help ensure that students read the instructions before accessing the test.

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For example:

Even though you are taking your mid-term and final exams online, they are still "real" tests. The following are the testing procedures I expect you to follow while taking the exam:

- *You may use your book and notes; however, you are to take the test by yourself, with no group efforts or help from other people.*
- *This test has 50 objective questions (multiple choice, true/false and fill-in-the-blank) worth a total of 100 points.*
- *You have 60 minutes to complete the test. A timer will appear, but the test does not automatically stop at 60 minutes. You have to click Submit to end the test and stop the timer. You will lose 2 points for the first minute over 60 minutes that you go over the time limit. Each part of a minute after 61 minutes will result in the loss of an additional 5 points per minute.*
- *Remember not to click the Back button in your browser window. If something happens and your computer freezes, get back into the test as quickly as you can. As soon as you complete the test, send me an e-mail detailing your problem.*
- *If you lose your ability to access the Internet during a test, use your phone to call my office (467-XXXX) as soon as possible. Leave a voice mail if it is after hours. Do not wait until later.*

Now, click the Mark Reviewed button to the right to show you understand these procedures and expectations. The link to the test will then become visible.