

# Blackboard Best Practices for Online Testing From Start to Finish

This document steps through a procedure you should consider when giving a Blackboard test. Following these steps will minimize the problems that can occur with testing through Blackboard.


## Before Beginning the Test

- **Securing the Test**
  1. Randomize the questions within a test. The students sitting next to each other during an in-class test will receive the questions in a different order.
  2. To further randomize the question order, create question pools or upload test banks to the question pool area. When creating tests from pools, extract the questions in random order by selecting a certain number of questions from different pools. This process will create tests with the same number of questions but present a different set of questions from the pools for each student.
  3. Password-protect the test and provide the password to students only when they are ready to take the test.
  4. Limit the date and time availability of the test. It is best to limit the time to the first 15 minutes of the test so that a student doesn't leave the test and inform other students of the password.
  5. Use the script found on the [North Institute website](http://www.oc.edu/north/v2/tip.aspx?tid=51) for preventing printing of a test. Link to script and instructions: <http://www.oc.edu/north/v2/tip.aspx?tid=51>
- **Laptop Problem Prevention**
  1. Have students make sure they have a good wireless connection (hover the mouse over the Wireless Network Connection icon on the Taskbar. The icon is four vertical bars.)
  2. Instruct students to log out and log back into Blackboard just before taking the test if they were already in it. This will help with some connectivity issues.
  3. If the test is later in the day instruct students to reboot their laptops if they have not done so within the last couple of hours. This will free memory resources from applications they have opened that may be running in the background.
  4. Maximize the browser window before starting the test. Minimizing during the test can prevent submission of the test.
  5. Double clicking the link to the test can lock the test. Make sure to single click the link that launches the test.

## During the Test

- **Prevent Laptop Lockup and Inability to Submit**
  1. Do not resize (minimize) the browser window during the test.
  2. Never click the "Back" button on the browser. This will take you out of the test and prevent Blackboard the ability to track selected answers.
  3. Avoid using the scroll button on a mouse.
  4. Click the "Submit" button. Do not press "Enter" on the keyboard in place of clicking "Submit"
  5. Divide the class in groups of 35 or smaller and stagger the student logins and test start times of the groups by 1-3 minutes.
  6. Present the entire assessment on one screen (all at once) rather than one question at a time.
  7. Recommend and remind students to save their test periodically (if option exists).

- **Prevent Cheating**

1. Ask that all applications except Blackboard be closed. In addition to more potential for cheating, some applications can conflict with Blackboard testing.
  - Specify Instant Messaging tools like AIM & MSN Messenger
    - Closing the IM window does not turn off the IM tool. IM users need to go to their Task Bar and right click on the application and Exit it or Sign Out of the IM software.
  - Specify PopUp blockers
  - Specify Email software like Outlook
2. Seat students in a fashion that they can be observed from behind. If you do not stand behind them there are those who will take advantage of the opportunity to cheat by Instant Messaging a friend, launching another file, using an image on the laptop background, or any number of other means including traditional forms of cheating.
3. Require that the Blackboard window be maximized.  This prevents using the desktop image as a cheat sheet. Be aware that maximizing and minimizing during the test can lock it.
4. Inform the class upfront that if you see other applications open, including IM tools they will be asked to leave and immediately given a 0.
5. If you choose to make the test available for the duration of the class you may want to reset the password after the class has logged in so that the password isn't provided to someone not in the classroom who could then take the test with the benefit of their notes, etc.

- **To help students submit their tests successfully**

1. An online test can never take longer than three hours, which is the maximum length of a login session on Blackboard. We recommend that you keep the length of the test shorter than one hour; therefore, longer assessments should be separated into multiple test sessions.
2. Use the "All at once" presentation mode for the test to present the entire assessment on one screen. This will prevent students from accidentally skipping test questions.
3. Uncheck the "Forced Completion" display option under "Test Availability" to provide a "Save" button at the bottom of the test. This allows students to save their work frequently during the test. In order to time the test, use the "Set time limit" option instead of "Forced Completion".

## What to do when a test locks or submit fails

1. On startup of the test some students will receive a message that says they have completed the test or submission is in process.
  - WHY? This appears to occur when too many log on at once or from the link being double clicked.
  - WHAT TO DO? Reset the attempt
    1. Go to Control Panel
    2. Click gradebook
    3. To clear the attempt click on the lock in the gradebook,
    4. Click “View”
    5. Click “Clear Attempt”
    6. Click “OK”
  
2. Sometimes during the test a student will receive a message saying they have submitted their test or the submission is in process.
  - WHY? This can occur from a number of things, including minimizing the browser window sometime during the test, using a scroll mouse, clicking the browser back arrow, pressing Enter on the keyboard and possible other ways.
  - WHAT TO DO? Generally, you will need to Reset the attempt as defined in item one above. On some occasions you can click the browser back arrow and click “save” at the bottom of the test and continue where you left off. This is not common, but worth checking.
  
3. On submission of the test students will occasionally receive a “submission in progress” or “test already submitted” with no results displayed.
  - WHY? This can occur because a browser window was resized during the test, the browser back arrow was clicked taking the user out of the test at some point, or the student used a scroll mouse that conflicted with blackboard.
  - WHAT TO DO? If a student has not clicked out of the test and “Forced Completion” is not on, you can often click “Save” and then click “Submit” and the test will be submitted. If the student has clicked out of the test page already it will be necessary to clear the attempt. See “What to do?” under item one in this section. If it continues to not allow you to submit the test, look in the gradebook to see if the test results were actually saved. If they were, you can input the grade by clearing the attempt and typing the grade in the grade field. Be aware, that doing this will remove the ability for you to see how each question was answered.

It is also good to click on the students name in the gradebook and then click “User grade list” to see if a grade may have been posted here. Occasionally during a submission lock a grade will still get posted here although you can’t see it in the main gradebook page.

## What to Tell Your Students Before a Test

It is recommended that the following information be provided to students prior to taking a test in Blackboard. This can be provided as part of your Course Information in Bb as well as being communicated with the class verbally or projected just prior to the test. Communicating this information can greatly reduce the number of problems you could experience when giving a test online.

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### Taking Your Test in Blackboard

*There are a number of issues that can occur when using technology for testing, but there are also benefits, like knowing the results sooner. To minimize the problems that can occur, please read the following list and apply what you learn when taking tests in Blackboard.*

#### Before the Test

- Make sure you have a good wireless connection
  - Move the mouse over the Wireless Network Connection icon on the Taskbar to see how good the connection is. If the connection is low, it is recommended to move to another location in the classroom. The icon is four vertical bars. If no connection is established either reboot or click *Start > Connect To > Wireless Connection*. This will generally start the enabling process. If it does not click on *Enable*.
- Log out and log back into Blackboard just before taking the test if you were already in Blackboard and have been in any other courses since it was opened.
- If the test is later in the day reboot your laptops if you have not done so within the last couple of hours. This will free memory resources from applications they have opened that may be running in the background
- Close ALL applications except Blackboard. This includes IM tools, email, and pop-up blockers. Simply closing an IM browser window does not stop the software. Right click on its icon in the Taskbar and Exit or Sign Out.

#### Launching the Test

- Maximize the browser window before starting the test. Minimizing during the test can prevent submission of the test.
- Do NOT double click the link to the test. This will lock the test and say you have already completed it. If this occurs the instructor will need to reset your attempt.

#### During the Test

- Do not resize (minimize) the browser window during the test.
- Never click the Back button on the browser. This will take you out of the test and prevent Blackboard the ability to track selected answers.
- Avoid using scroll button on a mouse or keyboard
- Do not Alt+Tab out of the test
- Click the “Submit” button. Do not press “Enter” on the keyboard in place of clicking “Submit”
- If the option is available, save the test periodically