Best Practices for Online Testing: Technical Tips

Choose recommended test options

To minimize technical problems and deter cheating, the following selections are recommended on the "Test Options" screen in Blackboard.

Section 1: Test Information
- ✓ **DO** provide good instructions for students in the description box.
  - Students will see this information before they take the test. Helpful information can include: what the test covers, time limit, number and type of questions, reminder about academic honesty, link to tips for avoiding problems, etc.
- ✗ **DON'T** set tests to "open in new window"

Section 2: Test Availability
- ✓ **DO** make the test link available!
- ✗ **DON'T** allow multiple attempts (use this for practice tests or self-assessment activities only)
- ✗ **DON'T** force completion for time-limited tests
- ✓ **DO** set a time limit of 1.5 hours or less!
- ✓ **DO** restrict availability of tests to 1-2 days

Section 3: Self-Assessment Options
Leave these at the defaults!
- ✓ **DO** include test in grade center calculations
- ✗ **DON'T** hide results from instructor and grade center!!

Section 4: Test Feedback
- • Initially, leave all of these un-checked, or check "Score" only.
- • After all students have submitted the test, you can enable these options to allow students to view detailed results.

☑	Score
☐	Submitted answers
☐	Correct Answers
☐	Feedback

Section 5: Test Presentation
- ✓ **DO** select to present questions "**one at a time**"
  - Instructor can choose to prohibit backtracking OR leave this un-checked to allow more flexibility for students
- ✓ **DO** randomize questions

Point students to online tips page

Durham Tech's "Help for Students" web site (maintained by Instructional Technologies) provides important tips to help students avoid problems with online tests. This site can be accessed from the Blackboard login page, or by clicking the "Help" icon at the top of the screen within Blackboard.

We recommend that instructors link to these tips and ask students to review them before starting a test:
http://courses.durhamtech.edu/wiki/index.php/Taking_online_tests_or_quizzes

Use randomization techniques

Randomizing makes cheating (specifically, sharing test information) a little more difficult for students, because it provides each student with a different version of the test. There are three ways to introduce randomization into online tests in Blackboard:

1. Randomize the order in which test questions are displayed.
   Simply check the appropriate box on the test options screen (see above)

2. Randomize answer choices (on multiple choice, multiple answer, and matching questions).
   When creating a question item, check the box to "Show Answers in Random Order"

3. Set up the test to pull random blocks of questions from a larger pool.
   a. Create a test pool (*Control Panel > Pool Manager*)
   b. Add questions to the pool. Questions can be imported from existing assessments.
   c. Create a test. From the drop-down where you select question types to add, choose "Random Block".
   d. Select the pool to pull questions from. Choose question types to use (typically, "all") and specify number of questions to pull and point value for each question.

Limit printing and copying

Blackboard does not provide built-in options to keep students from printing or copying tests. However, motivated instructors may add javascript code to the test instructions box, which prevents printing in some browsers and disables some copy options (e.g. right-click and Ctrl-C).

It's important to note that this is not a complete solution, as this technique is not guaranteed to work on all web browsers. And it does not affect the "copy" option on the Edit menu. Also, enterprising students may use screen capture and other methods to "copy" test questions.

For detailed instructions on how to use javascript to limit printing and copying, see:
http://www.blackboard.niu.edu/blackboard/assessments/cheating.shtml

NOTE: Displaying questions "one-at-a-time" makes it difficult for students to print or copy test questions when taking the test, because they would have to print (or copy) each question separately.

HOWEVER, if the instructor chooses to display detailed feedback to students (submitted and/or correct answers – see Section 4 on page 1), this will be displayed "all at once" and provides an opportunity for students to easily print/copy test questions and/or answers.

As a partial solution, instructors can utilize the javascript technique described above, which can limit printing/copying options on the feedback screen as well as the test screen.