

Tip on Taking Online Exams

Very important: If your instructor gives you a time block of one, two, or several days to complete an exam, do not wait until the last minute to do it. Should any technical problems arise, you're less likely to get them solved at the end of an examination time block. Your instructor might also be less sympathetic.

Initial setup

Have two browsers available. Blackboard recommends using Microsoft Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox for all Blackboard related tasks. If you are using IE8, make sure you enable Compatibility View with IE7 because there has been a reported issue with the Save and Submit buttons being blocked by the Time Elapsed box on timed exams.

Check Internet connection. When deciding on a time to take your exam, take into account times when your connection seems to slow down or lose connectivity. These issues can cause your exam to disconnect, possibly making you lose your work.

Also, if you live in a location where the Internet may be interrupted during an exam due to weather or small animals, please select a location where the Internet connection is more secure like a public Library or even McDonalds or Arby's.

Disable pop-up blockers. Pop-up blockers can cause problems with saving and submitting Blackboard exams. If you have multiple pop-up blockers, disable them all. These blockers come installed in the latest versions of Internet Explorer and Firefox, in third-party toolbars such as Google and Yahoo, and they can come with utility software such the Norton products from Symantec.

Time considerations. Blackboard assessments do not time out. It is your responsibility to keep an eye on the timer to ensure that you have enough time to complete the test/quiz. If you submit an exam or quiz late, your instructor may deduct points from your total score on the test. Save your answers or the exam frequently.

Dial-up users. If you use dial-up to connect to the Internet, disable call waiting. If you answer a call during the exam, Blackboard might assume you abandoned the exam and will erase your answers.

America Online (AOL) users. If you use AOL to connect to the Internet, please be aware of compatibility issues with the AOL browser. We recommend using AOL to connect, then using either Internet Explorer or Firefox to complete your exam. One caveat: AOL does not consider activity in an external browser as online activity and might terminate your connection after a certain amount of inactivity. If this is the case, you have two preventative options:

1. Occasionally do something within the AOL browser to keep the activity alive, or
2. Use an alternate computer to take your exam.

Taking the exam

Read your instructor's policy. If your instructor has a policy on how she will deal with students who claim that technical problems prohibit them from submitting exams properly, read that policy carefully. It might be located in the course syllabus.

Click Take Quiz/Exam. Click it once, not twice. You will get a prompt asking you if you are sure you want to take the exam. Once you click Begin, you may begin your exam.

Allow the page to load completely before answering questions. Depending on your Internet connection, the page may take a moment or two to load completely. If you begin scrolling or answering questions before it loads completely, it might not load all of the questions and they might go unanswered.

Read the exam instructions carefully. The exam instructions tell you exactly how to take the exam, and will include any special instructions that your instructor might have included. Any instructions about back tracking, forced completion, and multiple attempts will be listed here.

- **Force Completion:** Once you begin the exam, you are required to complete it in one session.

As soon as you leave the exam by clicking elsewhere, you will not be able to access it again. For exams that deliver all of the questions on one page, if you did not save any answers or save the exam, none of your answers will be recorded.

- **Allow Multiple Attempts:** You may start and stop the exam as many times as you wish (within the total time limit for the exam if there is one). Once you finish the exam you will need to submit it for your score to be recorded.
- **All at Once:** If all of the exam questions appear on the page at once, the Save button will appear next to each question. It is a good idea to click Save after each question answered, in case of technical difficulties. Saved answers will be recorded.
- **One at a Time:** If the exam is in this mode, the Save button will be displayed for each question. Again, it is good practice to save after each question. Click the forward arrow once you are done with the question. Once you move to the next question, the previous answer will be saved and recorded.

Write essay answers in a word processor. You are allowed to copy and paste from a word processing program into Blackboard. By writing your essay answers in a word processor, you are essentially creating a backup of your answer. This comes in handy if any technical difficulties arise. You can also check your spelling and grammar in the word processor.

Prepare your browser for short-answer or essay questions. If you get confronted with a dialog box saying "The application's digital signature has been verified. Do you want to run the application?", click Run. This will allow you to, among other things, use Blackboard's Visual Text Box Editor, a text area into which you can type.

How often to Save. We recommend that students save after each question. If you are able to go back and review questions, make your changes and click on Save again after any modifications/edits.

Submitting the exam

Submit the exam. Once you have finished answering the questions, click the Submit button at the bottom of the exam. If you do not submit the exam, you will receive no credit for your answers. You should see a confirmation page if the submission was successful. Clicking the Save button does not submit the exam.

Confirm your submission. If you received confirmation or feedback, your score was recorded successfully. If you did not receive confirmation, go back to the content area and locate the exam. Click the link to the exam. Blackboard should tell you that the exam has been completed or will give you feedback about the exam.

You can check the My Grades area to confirm exam submission. If you see a grade/score then you are finished. If there is an exclamation point (!), then the instructor may need to grade an essay question. If anything happened to your browser or Internet connection during the exam, or you received any error messages, include this information with in an email to the instructor. They must contact technical support to assist with these issues.

Common errors/issues

Accidentally quitting the exam. If you lose power or close your browser--or something else causes you to stop taking the exam before you submit it--contact your instructor immediately to get instructions. Make sure to include details as to what caused the problem.

Firewall. If you have a firewall installed on your system, it might prevent you from accessing your exam. You can either temporarily disable your firewall, or take the exam at a non-firewalled computer.