

## Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence



### Teaching Tips

### Tips on Testing

Many teachers dislike preparing and grading tests, and most students dread taking them. Yet tests are useful to diagnose student instructional needs. Here are some "tried and true" tips to help you develop tests for your courses.



**Time your tests** to make sure they fit the time allotted. Keep in mind that students will need more time than you to answer all the questions.

**Create tests at an appropriated level** for your students. Many instructors create tests that they consider easy and discover that they were extremely difficult for students. While it's not easy to put yourself back into the mindset of a learner, you need to do so when creating exams.

**Test on what is covered.** Be sure to create exams that align with information and skills that are particular to a given class. It's tempting to see if students can extend beyond the information and exercises given, but it's not fair to grade them on content that was not covered in the course.



**Copies of old exams are likely to be in circulation** among students. Monitor your re-use of tests and update tests periodically.



**Open book tests** can be the best way to test particular skills. Higher order thinking skills require students to move beyond memorization of facts. Open book tests can be an effective way to evaluate application and problem-solving ability.

**Use different testing methods.** Research shows that students vary in their preferences for different formats, so using a variety of methods will help students do their best. Multiple choice, true-false, matching, short-answer and essay questions are all effective ways to assess student achievement.

**Involve assistants in designing exams.** If your course has graduate student instructors (GSI) or teaching assistants (TA), involve them in designing tests. At the least, ask your GSIs or TAs to read your draft of the exam and comment on it. Not only will they have useful suggestions, but their participation in designing an exam will help them grade the exam.



**Write questions that test skills other than recall.** Most tests administered by faculty rely too heavily on students' recall of information. It is important for tests to measure higher-learning skills.



**Grade tests promptly.** Students want feedback so they can monitor their own progress. Inform students of their scores as soon as possible so they can take corrective action if needed.

For other ideas, please visit these resources

<http://www.ute.edu/Administration/WalkerTeachingResourceCenter/FacultyDevelopment>

<http://faculty.washington.edu/Krumme/guide/blooml.html>

<http://www.uleth.ca/edu/runte/tests/>