Blackboard Collaborate
Best Practices for Taking Blackboard Test

Preparing for the Test

Your Network Connection: Make sure your connection is reliable. If you have trouble with your connection during a storm, don't take a test during a storm. If you are using dial-up, make sure you have turned off call waiting. If you have an option to use your wireless or wired connection, go with the wired connection.

Prepare your Environment: Turn off your Instant Messenger, and close all the other applications you won't need for your test. Go to a quiet room, or let others in your home know that you will be taking a test. Get what ever materials you might need for your test, including some scratch paper and pencil/pen to write notes about questions you might skip, work-out math problems, etc. Yes, paper and pencil should be used even when taking an electrontic test.

Plan Your Time: Give yourself time to take the test, include some additional time in case you run into any technical problems. Once you start a test, don't leave your computer until it is finished. Give the test your full attention and don't try to multi-task.

Starting the Test

Start your Test: You start your test by going into your course's content area and clicking on the name of the test. You can then click on the button that says "Begin." Once you click "Begin," your attempt has started, and will be logged for your instructor.

Read the Instructions: The Blackboard test provides a number of different options. Each one of your teachers will use different options. Make sure understand what your instructor is expecting of you. Some of the features you may notice include:

- Multiple Attempts: The teacher may allow you to take the test more than once. Many of our instructors will use this option because PAVCS uses a mastery based currriculum. Other teachers might use it so that if you have a technical problem, you can retake the test without contacting them first.
- Password Protected: Your teacher should provide you with a password prior to you taking the test if he/she uses this option. If you don't know or don't remember the password, you will need to contact your instructor.
- All at Once / One at a Time: Teachers can chose to display the test will all the questions on a single page, or with one page for each question. If the teacher has chosen "All at Once," then you should remember to click the "Save" button as you answer each question. This should help in case of technical difficulties. If the teacher choosen "One at a Time," going to the next question will automatically save the current questions response. Using the "Save" option does not lock your answer in, you will still be able to change your answer during the test if you so choose - just don't forget to

save it again.

- Timed Test: Your teacher may put a time limit on the test. If so, there will be a timer that appears on your screen. If you take longer the the alloted time to complete the test you will still be able to submit the test. But it will we be marked as "needs grading" and will be up to the teacher's descression weither to accept the test.
- Force Completion: If set, then once you start the test, you work until it is finished. If you leave the test or loss your connection, then you will NOT be able to come back and finish. If it is not set, then you will be able to press the "save" button after answering each question. Then should you have to leave, or you loss your connection, you will be able to come back and continue with your test from what ever point you last saved.

Be patient, and allow the page to load. If your teacher has choosen the "All at Once" option, it may take some time for the page to completely load. Wait for the entire page to load. Then wait an addtional minute or two before you proceed in case there are still parts of the page loading that you cannot visually see. After the page has completely loaded, then begin answering questions (and don't forget to use the save button).

Taking the Test

Avoid Multitasking: Don't try to several things in different windows while taking your test. You might accidentally close the test window, and if you try to interact with your Blackboard course in a different window while the test is in progress you will most likely run into problems.

Remember to use the Save Option: Save after every question you answer. Saving is not the same as submitting the test. Assuming your teacher has not turned off backtracking in the "One at a Time" option, you will be able to go back to any question and change your answer if you choose. Saving often can allow you to resume where you left off should you loss your connection, or some other technical problem interupts your session.

Stay Active in the Test Window: The assessment feature in Blackboard is set to time out after a certain number of minutes (between 30-60mins) of inactivity. You must do more then just type in a box, or choose an answer, or scroll the page to be considered "active". To reset the timer and be considered "active", you must do something that sends information back to the Blackboard server. This would include the "save" button or moving from one question to the next (when in a "One at a Time" test).

Keep Your Computer On and Awake: When you close the lid of your laptop, or if you should get up and take a break, your computer will go into "sleep mode". This will break your connection, and you may not be able to continue your test. This could also happen if your battery runs too low, or if your computer remains inactive for to long. Make sure your battery is full, or you are plugged in before you start your test. During periods of inactivity (Working on a long math problem, or writing a

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paragraph) you should move the cursor or scroll the page some.

Note the Type of Question: There are many kinds of questions a teacher can put on the test. Make sure you understand what you should do for each type. Some common types include:

- Essay: Typing a few paragraphs into the visual editor text box. NEVER copy paste from Word (or any other word processor program) into this box.
- File Response: Upload a file, perhaps an essay you have written in Word, or a scan of your math work.
- Fill in the blank: Type in the missing word(s) or phrase.
- Multiple Choice: Choose the correct answer
- Multiple Answer: You must choose ALL the right answers

Don't Ever Copy/Paste from Word: Even if a question expects an essay answer, never copy and paste from Word (or any other word processor program). Doing so will introduce some hidden and usually bogus HTML into your test and can result in some unexpected results.

Use Simple File Name: If a test includes a file response question, the name of the file on your computer that you will be uploading MUST NOT contain special charcters. Use only letters, numbers, dash (-), or underscore (_). DO NOT include spaces in your file name.

Submitting the Test

At the end of your test, you need to remember to press the "Submit" button. Remember that "save" is not the same as "submit", and you will not be able to get credit for your test until you press "Submit". You should see a confirmation page and/or a feedback page if all goes well.

Don't Ignore Warning Messages: You may receive a notice that some questions are incomplete, even if you are sure you did answer all the questions. Do not ignore the notice, you should:

1. Click "Cancel" to make the notice box go away.
2. Look over your entire test, and make sure you have answered all your questions.
3. Click the save button for "All at Once" tests, or continue to the end of the test for "One at a Time" tests.
4. Click the Submit button again.

Check the Feedback: Many of our teachers provide feedback for your test. Sometimes this might be just your score, other times it might be the correct answer, or just your provided answer. Review the feedback to verify your test was submitted as expected.

If there seems to have been a problem (maybe you don't get any feedback, or there

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was an error page when you tried to submit) then check your grades view. If you test shows a score, then all went well, and you should be able to click on the score to see any feedback (if the teacher has provided any). If you see a green exclamation point, it means that the test was successfully submitted, but the instructor needs to grade it. A page with a pencil means that the system things you are still taking the test. If so, then you should try and go back to the test and continue where you left off.

If you can't confirm your test has been submitted, **contact your instructor.** Ask him/her to check if your test came through and that it is complete. **Do not contact the Helpline.** They do not have access to your grade book, or the tests, and will not be able to help you.

Credits

This document is largely based on the "Test-Taking In Blackboard" (January 2010) document created for University of Oregon, which in turn was based on the document "Blackboard: Test-Taking Guide" (September 2009) created for Northwest Nazarene University.
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