

Student's Guide to Successful Testing in Blackboard

The online quizzes in Blackboard present several potential problems:

Dial-up If a student dials in from home using an Internet Service Provider (ISP), the ISP may kick him/her off for inactivity. The problem is that when taking a quiz or exam, the students are simply viewing one web page, so it appears that they are inactive. In AOL, use the keyword "smile4u" to prevent this (and also make sure that you are not using the AOL browser when taking the quiz-- see the browser recommendations section below). For other ISPs you can check your settings to make sure your time-out settings are set to the maximum allowed time by following these instructions (for use with Windows computers):

1. Click on Start, go up to Settings and click on Control Panel
2. Double-click on Internet
3. Click on the Connection tab near the top of the Internet window
4. Under Dial-up settings, choose the service you use to connect to the internet
5. Click on the Settings button
6. Click on the Advanced button near the bottom. You should see a check box on the window that appears which says: "Disconnect if idle for ____ minutes"
 - You can set this higher than its current value, but you should not uncheck this option

Quitting by Accident The quiz software is designed so that once a student begins taking a quiz, he/she can never take it again -- unless the instructor clears the attempt. For example, if the student closes the quiz window before hitting the "submit" button, then she can not take that exam again. This feature has unfortunate consequences for some students who make an honest mistake. For example, a student loses the right to retake an exam if she accidentally closes the window or if the browser crashes or if the electricity to the computer is shut off for any reason. Consequently, students should be warned to take quizzes carefully. To avoid losing a quiz, they should first close down the other programs running on the computer. Avoiding distraction, they should focus only on the quiz until it is finished. They should be careful not to close or even resize the window.

Resizing Erases Data In Netscape, resizing the quiz window will cause all information entered by the student up to that point to be erased. All answers will need to be reentered.

We recommend that the instructor give students instructions along these lines:

"When you take the quiz, you need to focus your attention and the attention of your computer on the quiz. Before you click on the link to the quiz, exit any other applications/programs running on your computer. Size the browser window comfortably (full-size is usually best). Then click the link to the quiz-- be sure to only click on the link once (DO NOT double-click on it since this can prevent you from being able to submit the quiz when you're done). Do not resize the window after you begin taking the quiz. Remember to click on the "submit" button when you are done taking the quiz. Do not exit the quiz (or use your browser's "back" button) until you have submitted it-- doing so will cause you to lose all of the answers that you have already entered. If you have technical problems with the quiz please contact your instructor as soon as possible."

Optimizing Test Taking in Blackboard -- Reminders for Students:

Before taking the quiz:

Do not take the quiz until ready.

Close down all other programs running on the computer. Having multiple programs open may cause problems that result in loss of quiz data.

Use Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher to take the quiz. Other browsers can cause problems.

Do not resize or refresh the screen after loading the quiz; make sure it is the size you want before going into the quiz. Most browsers refresh the page when you resize the screen. This means it will try to reload the quiz and may prohibit you from taking the test.

Do not wait until the last minute to take the quiz. If something goes wrong there won't be enough time to resolve the issue.

During the Quiz:

When entering the quiz, click the link only once. Sometimes it takes a while to load the quiz. If you click twice, you will get a message saying you already took the quiz and will be prohibited from completing it.

Do not use the back and forward buttons while taking a quiz. Instead, use the arrow keys to navigate.

Do not click on the Submit button until you are either done or have run out of time.

Click Submit only once; it may take a few moments to receive confirmation of successful submission.

Fill-in-the-blank questions are case sensitive. Your instructor will review these types of questions and manually award points accordingly.

If you are working at home on a dial-up connection, make sure your ISP time-out settings are set to the maximum allowed time.