

Teaching Tip 4: Assessments Techniques That Facilitate Learning and Reduce Cheating

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This week's tip builds on the theme "[Assessments for Learning and Evaluation](#)". Below are two assessment tips I have used for many years in a variety of courses including ones with enrollments of >200 students. They are built on the premise that assessment are levers that can be used to increase student learning. The first one "Exam Retake" helps ensure that all student have an opportunity to do well and addresses the need for students to build knowledge as they go through the course. If students don't understand the early material in a course they generally become increasingly lost and lose motivation as the course progresses. The second "Help Card" provides a security blanket that can reduce anxiety, encourages students to review and organize the course concepts and facts in studying for an exam, can take the place of an instructor constructed study-guide and eliminates the tendency for students bring an illegal cheat sheet to the in-class test.

Exam Retake

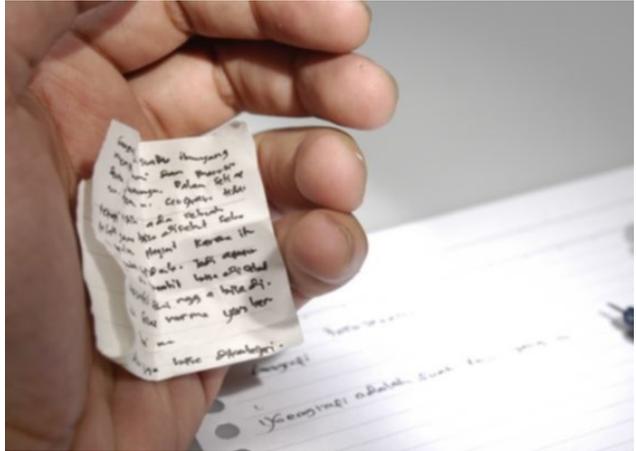
Give students a chance to re-take the test. The process works the following way: return the graded test the class or week following when it is given, inform students that they have the option to redo the exam. Students are given until the next class period to do the optional re-take exam. Post the original exam as a Word file on the class LMS. They must do ALL questions except those where they received full credit, for these they simply type full credit into the answer space on the retake exam. Once they download the exam they must complete it in typed form and sign a pledge that it is their



work and they did not use any human resources in completing the retake, e.g. it becomes an open-book, open web exam. The completed re-take exam is attached to the original graded exam and the two are submitted at the start of the next class. Their final test score is the average of the two. It is important to remind them that it is possible for their score to go down if the retake is less correct than their original exam. As odd as it seems, occasionally when students have no idea of what the class is about select random facts or such from the internet or books and they performance on the retake is less than the original. On average about one-third of the students do the optional re-take and the average improvement is around 10-15 percent. The retake option is especially helpful for students who studied the wrong things, are weak in some aspects of the subject area or for reasons unrelated to the course simply had a "bad" day. This allows students to pull up a failing grade to a passing one and helps those that are close to the next letter grade cross the line.

A Help Card

One way to reduce cheating on in-class exams is to allow students to bring to the exam a standard 4X6 "Index Card" with any handwritten notes or diagrams they choose. It is important that the notes/diagrams on the card are handwritten since this eliminates cutting and pasting materials, which is of no learning value. They can use both sides of the "help card". It is useful to provide blank 4X6 cards by handing them out in class the week before the exam, students are told they must get the card from me. This way the help card is standard for everyone. Students turn in the "Help Card" which they have signed when they turn in the exam. One suggestion is to give a prize (e.g. a bag of candy or such) for the best "Help Card" when you hand back the graded exams. It is best to not return the help cards to the student, so they cannot use the same card for the final. Use of the "help card" has many advantages; it indicates that the course is not about memorization, reduces the tendency to simply memorize facts, and encourages them to organize course material in a way that makes sense to them, and most importantly shows that you are interested in them doing well in the class.



Article Badawy, A., Ibrahim, M., Benson, S.A. 2016. Let There Be Hope: Assessing the Implications of Exam Re-Taking on Student Learning Outcomes and Grades of Engineering Students Grounded on Metacognition Awareness Framework, Volume: 1, Pages: 270-275. Conference Proceedings
DOI Bookmark: [10.1109/CSCI.2016.0059](https://doi.org/10.1109/CSCI.2016.0059)



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