

Analyzing Returned Tests

TEST ERRORS ARE USUALLY AN INDICATION OF KNOWLEDGE GAPS or errors in test-taking strategies.

Analyzing returned tests can help you understand why you made errors, so that you can adjust your study strategies and review techniques to improve your performance on subsequent tests.

If you do not get your test back, visit your professor. Ask to see your test so that you can determine why you gave incorrect responses. Your professor is an excellent resource for analyzing your returned test. Talk through how you arrived at your answers. Your professor can then point out your knowledge gaps and how you can better prepare for the next exam.



Review tests with your study partner or study group. Determine changes you can make in your review sessions to learn the material more effectively and develop more effective test-taking strategies.

ANALIZING RETURNED MULTIPLE-CHOICE TESTS

1. Read all comments and suggestions from your professor.
2. For each question you missed, verbalize the rationale for the correct answer. Determine why the correct answer was better than your answer.
3. Identify the origin of the test questions. Were they taken from lecture? text? lab?
4. Did you miss a question because you misread it (failed to read it carefully)?
5. What questions represent areas where you had not prepared sufficiently? What prevented you from being prepared? (Not realizing the material would be tested? Not understanding the material so failing to do a thorough review?)
6. Check the level of difficulty of your missed questions. Did they cover precise details straight from lecture or text (which require a lower level of learning, e.g., rote memorization)? Did they cover main ideas, concepts, principles (which require a higher level of learning where you can apply, analyze, and evaluate information)?
7. Did you budget your time on each question so that you were able to finish the test within the time given?
8. Did you experience blocking or loss of information because you were anxious?

ANALIZING RETURNED ESSAY EXAMS

1. Read all comments and suggestions so that you understand your professor's criticisms. If you do not understand his/her comments, or if you believe you gave the correct answer, write out your questions about how the exam was graded. Make an appointment to discuss your questions and gain a better understanding of your professor's expectations.
2. Determine your knowledge gaps.
 - a. Did most of the information your instructor expected in your essay come from the lectures? From the text? From outside readings?
 - b. Was there any course content tested which you did not anticipate?
 - c. Did your professor want more detailed information than you had expected?
 - d. Did you only memorize facts when the test questions required that you apply, analyze, or synthesize information?
 - e. Do you understand what important ideas you misunderstood?
 - f. Did you misunderstand what you were expected to do in your response? For example, were you to **discuss or explain** and you only **listed** information? Were you to **compare or contrast** and you only **explained**? Were you to **list and discuss** and you failed to include a discussion?
3. Evaluate your test preparation and test-taking strategies.
 - a. Did you wait too long to begin to prepare for the test?
 - b. Did you misread or misunderstand any of the questions?

- c. Did you fail to write down something in response to a question, even if you knew or remembered minimal information?
 - d. Did you fail to organize your ideas before you began to write or fail to proofread?
 - e. Did you run out of time?
4. Evaluate your anxiety level.
- a. Did you forget ideas and information which you studied well?
 - b. Did you experience physical symptoms that interfered with your ability to recall information?

AFTER YOU HAVE ANALYZED YOUR TEST

After you have conducted your analysis, determine what corrective action you need to take to improve your performance on your next test. Remember to use all available Utah State University resources: your professor; other classmates; your study partner or study group. If you are in a class for which Supplemental Instruction is provided, attend the sessions regularly. Use free campus tutoring or obtain a private tutor, if necessary.

