

# 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.

## Analyzing 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?

## Analyzing 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.



# Analyzing Returned Tests

Name:			
Class:			
Date of test:			
Test item missed			
Insufficient information	I did not read the text book thoroughly.		
	The information was not in my notes		
	I studied the information but could not remember it		
	I knew main ideas but needed details.		
	I knew the information but could not apply it.		
	I studied the wrong information.		
	Missed or did not understand vocabulary or terms		
	Answer did not match the essay directive/key word.		
Test anxiety	I experienced mental block		
	I was tired during the test and could not concentrate.		
	I was hungry during the test and could not concentrate		
	I panicked.		
Careless mistakes	I made careless mistakes; I knew the correct answer.		
	I changed a correct answer to a wrong one.		
	I misread the directions.		
	I misread or misunderstood the question.		
	I wrote an incomplete response.		
Lack of test wisdom	I did not notice a double negative statement.		
	I did not eliminate obviously incorrect choices.		
	I did not choose the best answer choice.		
	I did not notice limiting words.		
	I made poor use of the time provided for the test.		
Other			
Number of items missed			

Taken from College Learning and Study Skills, 6th edition, Long and Atkinson, Wadsworth Publishing, 2002.

