

Blackboard Tests – Best Practices for Students

Before the Test

Do not wait for the last minute! If you run into technical trouble while taking or submitting the test, you want to leave yourself ample time to get the problem resolved. You want to be sure the link to the test is still available if you need to get back in.

Use a supported browser and operating system. Firefox is the most reliable browser at this time. Check the [Online Student Resources Page of MyParker](#) for system requirements, like minimum hardware and software, to ensure the most stable test-taking experience.

Consider a wired internet connection. If you have access to a hardwired internet connection, we suggest you take your test using it. Wi-Fi can be unreliable, particularly in public areas, and you may not recognize whether you are connected until you try to Submit.

Restart your computer. Restarting your computer can free memory resources from applications that may be running in the background.

Limit the applications you have open. Before you start the test, close all programs that you do not need during the test to minimize interference with your test session. Also, make sure you do not have more than one browser window opened to Blackboard; this can cause problems when submitting your exam.

During the Test

Trouble? Take a screenshot and contact your instructor. Should you run into technical issues, take a screenshot –be sure the image includes date, time and identifies the web browser you are using - this information can be useful to your instructor and helpful for troubleshooting. Then, contact your professor immediately. The Parker University Information Technology Service Desk 214-902-2430 can help you troubleshoot technical issues; however, they cannot reset or reopen your test. It is solely your instructor's decision as to how to resolve your situation. Note: If your faculty has enabled Respondus Lockdown Browser, you will not be able to use an external application. Contact the instructor ahead of time if you are unsure if this is enabled for your exam.

Use single clicks and internal navigation. One of the quickest ways to inadvertently leave the test page or receive undesired results during a test is to hit your browser's Back button or double-click on a link. Blackboard Tests are meant to be navigated using the interface so you should only use the internal navigation links and avoid leaving the test page for any reason, including other pages within Blackboard.

Avoid Time-outs! Blackboard has a three-hour time out, and your Internet Service Provider may have something even shorter. This means that if your browser is idling on the test page for more than this amount of time and then you try to Submit the test, it is possible that you were logged out of Blackboard and your answers were not saved during that time. Furthermore, if your professor enabled the Forced Completion setting, they will have to clear your test attempt, and you will have to start the test over.

Save as you go. Next to each answer, and at the top and bottom of the test page, is a Save button. Even though Blackboard will periodically auto-save your answers, do use the Save buttons frequently. This keeps your interaction with the server active, so the time-out issue from above goes away, and also gives you some reassurance that Blackboard received your answers.

Use a plain-text editor like Notepad (Windows) or TextEdit (Mac) to write your essay and short answer responses. This way, particularly for longer essays, you have a copy in case you lose access and need to retake or reopen the test. While Blackboard does periodically save your answers, you may still want this extra assurance. You don't want to spend time typing directly into the test form only to lose your work if something unexpected occurs. Avoid using Microsoft Word, though, as it may inadvertently transfer hidden formatting to your response which can prevent Blackboard from saving it properly. Note: If your faculty has enabled Respondus Lockdown Browser, you will not be able to use an external application. Contact the instructor ahead of time if you are unsure if this is enabled for your exam.

Be aware of Auto-Submit! When you click on a Test link in Blackboard, you are directed to an interim page that gives you the test's instructions before you begin. Two important elements on this page are whether there is a Timer for the test and if the test will be auto submitted once the timer reaches its limit. If Auto-Submit is turned on, all saved answers are submitted when the timer hits its limit. If it is not turned on, you can go over the time limit, and this is reported to the instructor.

Close Files before Submitting. For tests that require you to submit a file, be sure to save and close the file before submitting it. When you submit an open file, it may appear to be accepted by Blackboard, but it can cause an issue resulting in a blank file to be submitted or none at all.

Submit. Submit. Submit! You may be inclined to get to the end of a test, click Save all Answers at the bottom of the page, and just close your browser. However, be sure to click Save and Submit if you are done. If you do not, your instructor will believe you are still in progress. Do not close the browser window or navigate to another site until you see the confirmation page.

After the Test

Understand Needs Grading. If any questions require the instructor to assign a grade individually, such as with short answers or essays, you will initially see an exclamation mark (Needs Grading) instead of your grade. Additionally, if you exceed a specified time limit, the Needs Grading status will also appear in place of a score.

Read the Feedback right. Your instructor can decide what you see when you Submit a test in Blackboard. The list of possibilities includes only a confirmation that the test was submitted, score per question, all possible answer choices, your submitted answers, the correct answers, and any textual feedback written into the test. You may also see some different variation of the above after all students' submissions are graded or on a specific date.

Keep random ordering in mind. Your instructor can randomize the test questions order as well as the answer order on each student's test attempt. This means that your multiple-choice possibility "A" may be someone else's "B," "C," "D," etc. We tell you this so that when the test results come back, pay more attention to the content of your answer than the letter/number you remember choosing.

Content for this was largely provided by the George Washington University Instructional Technology Lab “Blackboard Tests – Best Practices for Students” article.

For additional assistance, please contact your designated Technology Representative or AskOnline@parker.edu or ServiceDesk@parker.edu.