



One of the issues that comes up each time you talk about assessing online is the problem of cheating. The most frequently asked question is how you limit the possibility of students cheating. How do you know it is the student taking the assessment? How do you know that they are not using other materials or each other? These are excellent questions when it comes to online assessments. So, what are the answers? Here are some suggestions on how you can handle this issue.

Randomize Question and Answer Order

- Set up a question bank and have the test randomly draw from the bank. Each test and each student will have different questions. The WebCT software allows the course administrator to set up question banks from which you can randomly draw questions for EACH test and for EACH student. This means that no two students receive the exact same test and thus cannot completely aid each other in answering those questions of a multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, or matching nature.
- Randomize the order of answer choices in questions (where practical) so that students cannot simply tell others "the answer is B." (Warning: if a student opens a quiz that uses randomly ordered questions and answer choices for questions, then backs out without submitting the test, when they reopen the quiz the same questions will show in the same order but the answer choices will be in a new order.)

Develop distance test proctoring arrangements

- If appropriate and possible, proctor the assessment. Do not rely on unproctored online quizzes for the total grade in a course. You may also want to consider adding a password to proctored exams, and an IP restriction if feasible.

Utilize WebCT tracking features

- The test software can keep track of all logins by each student for each test administered. Thus, a complete record of when each student enters and exits the test, and how long they stay entered is available. This feature makes it easy to identify the students who pop in and out of tests for the express purpose of looking up answers.

Set a time limit on the quiz

- The length of each test and the time slot during which the quiz can be taken is controllable through the test editor. Try limiting the quiz to one attempt and make it time limited. Once it is opened, the clock starts whether or not any questions have been answered. Even if the quiz is closed and the student returns at a later time, time would have been logged on the tracking features of WebCT. You can look into the time spent on the test to reveal when the student originally opened the test and when they actually began to save answers.



Control the number of times a student can take a test

- The number of times that the student can take a test can be managed through WebCT. The course administrator can also control the exact grade a student receives, when they receive a graded test and even specific breakdowns that compare individual answers for the same question.
- Allow students to take the assessment twice and average the grades together, this may lower the level of anxiety, which may in turn lower the need to cheat.

Assume that all online quizzes are open book format

- Allow students to use their notes and resource materials with the understanding that they will have a limited amount of time to take the assessment, so they will not be able to look up all the answers.
- Create group assessments where they can use notes, other resources, and each other.

Revisit question formats

- Use essay questions to eliminate some cheating. Essays are helpful in "encouraging" students to take the path of honesty in constructing their answer.
- Include open-ended questions that require thoughtful analysis of the subject matter and compare student submissions.

Deter quiz printing

- Set Quizzes in WebCT to have only one question per screen to make printing of quizzes more difficult. Release questions one at a time without the ability to revisit a question.
- Make the printing of quizzes in WebCT more difficult by setting the text as white and the background as dark blue. Click on each of the custom colors for background and text to change them to dark blue and white.

Rethink your assessment strategy

- Change the way you do assessments: switch from traditional, objective testing to more alternative assessments, like portfolios, projects, papers, or group activities. Use quizzes more as a self-assessment and base the major part of their final grade on other criteria.
- Provide many graded and ungraded assessment opportunities for students (consider using the Self Test tool or weekly "practice" quizzes).
- Increase the number of assessments so that each one is not worth as much; therefore, students are not as likely to feel they need to cheat. You can also combine this with the ability to drop a grade or two.