



Oregon State University  
Center for Teaching  
and Learning

## Onwards to Better: Considerations for Fall 2021 Teaching

During remote learning, students conducted all their learning activities via a computer and instructors often provided notes, slides, and lecture recordings. As we return to classrooms, what should stay? In this series we address major questions educators face and provide evidence-informed answers (see full references here <https://beav.es/3Vc>)

### SHOULD YOU USE UNTIMED/ OPEN BOOK TESTS?



#### WHAT SOME FACULTY MAY THINK:

*Students may cheat.*

#### WHAT SOME STUDENTS MAY THINK:

*I will be less anxious.*

### What the Evidence Suggests ---

#### Pros

- Research shows untimed/open book tests are more valid and reliable measures of learning and are more inclusive and equitable.
- Instructors can focus on asking better questions (that cannot be “looked up”) fostering better learning.
- Open book tests reduce anxiety.

#### Cons

- Students taking closed-book tests perform better in some studies.
- Students do not study as much or in the same way for open book tests as they do for closed book tests.
- The potential for academic integrity issues increases.

**BOTTOM LINE:** The test format produces little differences in learning outcomes (Durning, et al., 2016) and properly constructed untimed/open book tests provide many advantages from higher order learning, equity, cost savings (e.g., scantrons, proctoring), and reductions in anxiety. Honor codes and instructions can reduce academic integrity issues.

**In General:** The effectiveness of your pedagogical choices on learning depend on a number of factors (e.g., the educator and student characteristics, discipline, course level, lecture, & slide quality). **Be intentional, transparent, and compassionate in pedagogical decision making. It always pays to be [CCOMFE](#) (Compassionate, Clear, Organized, Multi-faceted, Flexible, and Engaging).**



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