



Oregon State University
Center for Teaching
and Learning

Onwards to Better: Key Considerations for 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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