

The Post Test Survey

The Post Test Survey (PTS) has the potential to provide the most useful feedback a learner can get to increase knowledge and improve grades. Without knowledge about how well skills for learning work, learners are more likely to repeat unproductive study skills and ignore productive ones.

The time immediately after an exam is a significantly important time for learners. When a test is graded and returned, going over exam answers is the best opportunity for learners to discover which study skills worked well and which didn't. Information from the PTS can be the basis for refinements in skills for learning that lead to better grades. Instructors who do not return quizzes and tests to students inadvertently inhibit opportunities to refine the very skills indispensable to learning their subject matter.

Modifying the skills for learning is important because it is only through the application of learning skills to subject matter that gains the knowledge essential for better grades. Therefore, to change grades, the skills for learning must be modified.

Two Keys to Raising Test Grades

- Study skills that worked must be identified so they may be repeated.
- Study skills that didn't work must be identified, modified or replaced so they won't be repeated.

Without knowing these two key strategies, learners are likely to repeat nonproductive study skills that produce lower grades and remain ignorant of the study skills they use that are effective. Below is one model for properly implementing a Post Test Survey. The focus is on faster more productive ways to gain the knowledge needed for better grades. When you get a quiz or test back, follow these five easy steps to analyze the effectiveness of the learning skills you used.

Step One: Identify the sources of questions and answers on tests

Determine the lecture date of textbook page numbers where questions and answers or problems and solutions came from. Jot this information down next to the question or problem on the returned test. This will help you spot clues the main ideas in textbook and lecture that instructors use when selecting information for future exam questions. For example:

- Main ideas in bold print, italics, a SUMMARY, and outline at the beginning of a chapter, in list form, numbered, in a picture/chart/drawing, margin notes, etc.
- How much time did the instructor spend on this topic in lecture or what was done to emphasize the importance of this material in lecture?
- How much text was devoted to this topic in the textbook?

Step Two: Use the Solutions Below To Solve Study Skills Problems

Problem	Solution
My notes were incomplete and/or inaccurate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compare notes with an A student.• Tape lectures (with permission) and use the tape later as an aid to build a complete set of notes.• Join/form a study group and compare notes.• Sit in the first row in class to make listening easier.• Ask your instructor if enough details are in your notes to earn an A.
Pieces of an answer or solution are missing in my notes and my test answer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For any test, be certain you include all the main ideas and their details from lecture and texts in your notes.• Recognize and use the clues to important ideas in the texts or lectures as a signal for what to include in notes.• If notes were complete and accurate, determine how did you review and how many times did you review the material, then revise how you reviewed and/or increase the number of reviews.
I have trouble spotting the clues in the text or lecture that indicate information could be used in a likely test question.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In textbooks look for bold print, italics, headings, sub-headings, outlines, summaries, end-of-chapter questions, pictures, graphs, charts, diagrams, examples, lists, numbered items, etc.• In lectures, listen for repeated ideas, delivered in a louder or softer tone of voice, Notice introductions of topics to be covered in each day's lecture. Be sure to include all of what is put on the board in your notes, included in hand-outs, and questions and answers to questions the instructor raises.
I have the information in my notes but I forget it when I take a test.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine how many times you recited and reviewed the material to get it into memory.• Organize notes so that you can self-test to discover how much you have learned and not yet learned before you take a test when you can still do something about it.• Use more mnemonics and pictures, diagrams, charts in your notes to aid recall.

I have too many or too few details in my notes.

- Ask instructors to review notes and offer suggestions on adding or deleting details.
- Look at past tests to see how much detail was required for a perfect answer.
- Look at an A student's answer to see how much detail he or she has included.
- See a learning skills counselor for advice.

Step 3: Determine how many times you practiced learning the material that could have been on a quiz or test

In general, people become better at that which they practice. That applies to sports as well as learning. Unfortunately, learners are not usually taught that they must practice what they need to learn. The results are the same if an athlete does not practice: poor performance. To practice in learning, a learner must recite and review material a number of times.

Recitation means practice by saying answers to questions or details to main ideas out loud, without looking at notes and then checking. With math, chemistry or physics problems, practicing involves doing solutions over and over after looking only at the problem. Practice allows learners to know immediately how well material is or is not learned and remembered.

Too few reviews are a major cause of low grades.

Reviewing means reciting material a number of times on a regular basis. Going over material once or twice before a test for most people results in poor learning and recall on exams. This is normal.

Some learners can review material two or three times to get an A while others must review five to eight times or more to get an A. It is normal to forget, misorder ideas, make careless mistakes, or have difficulty in recall at test time when not enough reciting and reviewing is done. The number of reviews needed to get information into long-term memory so that it is not forgotten at test time varies with each individual. Interestingly, the number of reviews a learner needs to get information into long-term memory is not related to intelligence.

Step 4: Evaluate

Identify which study skills you used for answers you got correct and which study skills you used for answers on which you lost points. Find the source of information for answers where you lost points. If the information was in your notes complete and accurately, this suggests more reviews and recitations are necessary. If the information was not in your notes, what were the clues that this information was important? (Bold print, italics, numbered items, recorded on the chalk board, etc.) Evaluation reveals where changes need to be made in your learning skills in preparation for the next test.

Step 5: Modify

One of the worst things learners can do in preparation for an upcoming quiz or exam is to promise to themselves to study harder. Studying harder with learning skills that do not work well will not improve grades. It is like playing tennis with a racquet that has no strings. No matter how hard you try, you won't do well until you have the proper tool for doing the job of playing tennis and the proper knowledge on how to use it properly. In learning unless you have the proper tools (learning skills) for doing the job of learning and the knowledge of how to use these tools properly, grades are not likely to improve. Specific changes are needed in those learning skills that were used for the last test if higher grades are to be achieved. Some sources of information for informed changes in learning skills are:

- Ask A-students what they did to learn. Find out how many times they reviewed the material and how they reviewed. What are the differences between what you did and what they did to prepare for a test? Consult a learning skills counselor for advice on the most effective skills for learning. Then do what is suggested.
- Consult a learning skills textbook in the library, in the campus learning center, or purchase one at the campus bookstore. Then do what is suggested.
- Take a learning skills class and/or attend learning skills workshops to get information on the latest, most time saving, and effective skills for learning. Then do what is suggested.

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