



How to Create More Engaging Test Reviews

Research shows that reviewing content increases students' retention of that content, especially if this exposure requires them to retrieve information from memory. Simply providing a study guide consisting of sample questions or a list of concepts may not be enough. Engaging students deeply and giving them control over review sessions leads to more engaged students, better grades, and long-term retention of course content.

One way to increase engagement is to include students in the planning of review sessions. Student choice, control, agency, and ownership of the learning process have a positive impact on student motivation, effort, and perception of the course. Having students vote on the type of review session they want is one method for increasing this sense of agency.

We all know that some students are intrinsically motivated to learn course content simply for the joy of learning. If not all students in your classroom are intrinsically motivated, providing some extrinsic motivation can also help. Competition, or a more tangible reward like candy or bonus points, can help to further increase student engagement and participation in the review activity.

Activities

Once you've determined how to approach the review session, you're ready to begin preparing the activities themselves. Here are a number of games and activities that help students review course content:

- **Crossword Puzzles:** Create crossword puzzles based on course content using free downloadable software such as Hot Potatoes (<https://hotpot.uvic.ca/>) or websites such as Discovery Education (<https://www.discoveryeducation.com/>). Encourage students to complete as many answers as possible from memory before referring to their textbook or notes.
- **Heads Up/HeadBandz:** Students hold an index card or sticky-note to their foreheads on which a course-related term is inscribed. They then have to guess the word based on their classmates' clues or description of the concept. This works best in small groups, though many sessions can run simultaneously.
- **20 Questions:** A student is allowed to ask 20 questions in order to guess a selected concept from the course. Concepts can be instructor-generated or student-generated. Other students who are aware of the concept being guessed answer each of the 20 questions in order to help their classmate guess the term. This activity works best in pairs or small groups.
- **Taboo:** Students describe a term so that their classmates can guess it correctly without using predetermined "taboo words." For example, for the term "zebra," taboo words might include "stripes," "Africa," "zoo," and "animal." The instructor can make cards indicating the term and taboo words ahead of time, or include their creation as part of the review by having groups of students make a set of cards and exchange them with another group. Creating the cards is a great way to review as well, and requires deeper engagement with the content.
- **Slap-Word:** A small group of students sit around a desk or table. Each group has the same set of index cards. These cards are spread out face up on the table or desk, ensuring that all students can reach each card. The instructor reads a definition aloud to the class and students must find the correct word and immediately slap their hand over it. The first student to slap their hand on the card gets to keep that card. A prize may be given to the student with the most cards at the end of the game.
- **Jeopardy:** Jeopardy has generated countless free online templates in PowerPoint for instructors to populate with their own review content. If there are enough computers in the class, students may operate the game themselves in small groups, or the instructor can host the game for the entire class with students competing individually or with each "contestant" consisting of a small group.
- **Cranium:** Students have 30 seconds to describe a concept in one of four ways, determined by what number they roll on a dice, with the goal of getting their classmates to guess the correct term. If they roll a one, they have to sculpt the concept

with modelling clay; a two means drawing it; acting it out or miming for rolling a three; describing it with words if they roll a four; the group decides the format if they roll a five; and the student decides the format if he or she rolls a six. Although this requires more materials and planning than some of the other options, students enjoy the creativity required.

- **Immediate Feedback Assessment Technique:** Teams of students answer multiple-choice review questions using immediate feedback scratch-off cards which can be purchased online (<http://www.epsteineducation.com/home/about>). These cards are a hybrid between a lottery scratch-off card and a traditional scantron form. When students select their answer, they scratch off the corresponding box to see if their answer is correct. If it is, there will be a star. If not, students continue trying to determine the correct answer, scratching off one box at a time. If awarding something to the winning team, cards must be hand scored. It is easiest to have students count the number of unscratched boxes for points (i.e., if they obtained the correct answer on the first try, there would be three boxes unscratched, so that would be worth three points; if they had to try again, it would be two points, etc.)
- **Photo Collage Presentations:** Individually or in small groups, students create collages related to certain instructor-assigned concepts using old magazines, newspapers, advertisements, or flyers. Students then present their concept collage to the class and explain why they chose those specific images and how those images relate to the concept.
- **Team-Based Discussion:** Small groups of students receive one review question to answer and then report to the class. The group discusses the answer and possible alternative answers if there is disagreement. This works well with either multiple-choice or open-ended questions, and lends itself especially well to challenging concepts.

Final Thoughts

Most of these activities can be adapted to specific classroom needs with a little creativity, such as having multiple games running simultaneously. With a little planning, students can be involved in and have control over test reviews, which motivates them to engage with course material.

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