# Common Types of Exams

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Exam Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Pros of Use</th>
<th>Cons of Use</th>
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| Multiple-choice/short answer/true-false/matching exams | Students are asked to select one response to a question from a set of alternatives. Short answer questions require that students provide a brief response to a question. Typically used as a way to demonstrate knowledge of critical content. | • Easy to grade  
• Students can complete in a short amount of time  
• Allows for item analysis  
• Can be objectively graded  
• Easy to create multiple versions of a test when using this type  
• High reliability | • Are time consuming to create.  
• Statistically, students have a higher possibility of getting an answer correct without knowing the content  
• Answer options can be misleading if not worded correctly  
• Students think they are easier than other test types |
| Essay tests                                   | Students are asked to provide a lengthy response to a question. Often, they are expected to explain complex concepts from a chapter or unit. | • Are generally easy to create  
• Allows for open student expression  
• More flexibility in grading  
• Requires use of high-order critical thinking skills (e.g., higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy such as evaluation or analysis)  
• Can also assess writing skills in the discipline | • Are time consuming to grade  
• Can be challenging for students who are not proficient in the language of the exam  
• Are more subjective in nature as it pertains to grading  
• Only covers specific learning outcomes; limited in terms of what it assesses  
• Can be lacking in reliability |
| Performance exams                             | Students are asked to demonstrate proficiency in a specific skill. This is typical in medical or STEM fields. | • Are specific to the discipline and target particular skills  
• Can be easy and quick to grade (this depends on the exam)  
• Students have a better chance of getting feedback faster  
• Often assessed by multiple instructors, so more reliable than essay exams  
• Valid means of assessing a student’s development in a skill over time | • Are only relevant in certain disciplines  
• Can produce more anxiety in students  
• Can have problems in interrater reliability  
• More subjective in nature  
• Can exclude some student groups (e.g., students with disabilities) |