

COMMON TYPES OF EXAMS

Exam Type	Description	Pros of Use	Cons of Use
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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)