What Key Factors Influence Test Performance?

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The Test Performance Reflection Exercise
Designed as a self-awareness exercise to learn the factors that contribute to test performance on multiple-choice tests.
The Test Performance Reflection Exercise

Students learn their particular strengths and challenges related to the testing situation.

What is Unique about this Exercise?

- Reflection is usually limited to “Why did I get this question wrong?”
- This exercise includes the question, “Why did I get this question right?”

What is Unique about this Exercise?

This reflection recognizes the effects of mental states as contributors to test performance.
The Five Factors That Contribute to Test Performance

1. Mental/Physical State
2. Degree of Test Anxiety
3. Preparation
4. Study Skills
5. Test-Taking Skills

Mental/Physical State

• Temporary situational factors such as physical pain, emotional stress, medications, illness, and sleep deprivation can be powerful distractions during tests. Classroom conditions, such as noise, temperature, and limited seating options, can affect students’ concentration and thus impair test performance.
Degree of Test Anxiety

- An optimal level of arousal actually improves cognitive functioning
- Test anxiety can result in poor test performance

Degree of Test Anxiety

- Test anxiety can be intermittent and is exacerbated by self doubts and an adversarial attitude toward the test

Preparation

- The nuts and bolts of good study preparation are often lost in test-taking strategies
Preparation

• The degree of preparation can be different from test to test

• Preparation includes the quality of class notes, attendance, and accurate knowledge of what the test will cover

Preparation

• This exercise asks how prepared the student felt, which provides a helpful comparison to actual performance

• This comparison is helpful for self-awareness and reality testing

Study Skills

• Many students have received no formal training in effective study skills
Study Skills

• Most students mistakenly think that their studying is adequate and effective.

Test-Taking Skills

• Some students simply do not “test well”—they understand the material but can’t navigate the multiple-choice format to reflect their true comprehension.

Test-Taking Skills

• Test-taking skills can be taught through formal workshops or through a short module included in the curriculum.
The Test Performance Reflection

Advantages:
• A comprehensive item analysis takes the student through each test question and asks, “Why did I get this one right, and why did I get this one wrong?”

Advantages:
• Answering these questions reveals all the variables that contribute to test performance

Advantages:
• Students discover that test performance is explained by more than whether or not they studied
The Test Performance Reflection

Advantages:
• Students discover novel variables such as
  • The importance of comprehension
  • Going slower
  • Paying attention to details
  • Minimizing second-guessing
  • Asking for help
  • Recognizing study preparations that do or don’t work for them

The Process

• Return the graded test and answer sheet to the students
• Distribute the two-page questionnaire and the separate answer sheet
• Be sure your answer sheet includes spaces for all the test questions

• Instruct students to carefully read the introduction and then record their answers to the six questions on the answer sheet
The Process

• Explain that they will re-read the test questions and their answers to discover why they got each question right or wrong.

The Process

• Direct students to attribute their performance to test-taking skills/factors and study skills

The Process

• Have students reflect on their results and recognize at least two ideas for future learning and test performance improvement
Summary

• This exercise is time intensive at first, but it yields great payoffs
• It can be used in any class and would be ideal for academic support personnel

Summary

• Students learn about all the variables involved in test performance by simply completing the questionnaire

Summary

• The process facilitates self-awareness that reinforces successful practices and identifies areas for improvement
• Students leave with a concrete plan
• Consciousness = self-responsibility
How Can I Help?

“Walk Away Changed” Workshops

“The Lighthearted Professor: Positive Psychology for the Master Teacher”

And several other faculty development titles…

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Thank you!

Tell us what you think:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TestPerform