

What Key Factors Influence Test Performance?

Presented by:

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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.



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The Test Performance Reflection Exercise

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



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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?”



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What is Unique about this Exercise?

This reflection recognizes the effects of mental states as contributors to test performance.



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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



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Mental/Physical State

- Temporary situational factors such as physical pain, emotional stress, medications, illness, and sleep deprivation can be powerful distractions during tests



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Mental/Physical State

- Classroom conditions, such as noise, temperature, and limited seating options, can affect students' concentration and thus impair test performance



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Degree of Test Anxiety

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



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Degree of Test Anxiety

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



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Preparation

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



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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



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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



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Study Skills

- Many students have received no formal training in effective study skills



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Study Skills

- Most students mistakenly think that their studying is adequate and effective



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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



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Test-Taking Skills

- Test-taking skills can be taught through formal workshops or through a short module included in the curriculum



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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?"



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The Test Performance Reflection

Advantages:

- Answering these questions reveals all the variables that contribute to test performance



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The Test Performance Reflection

Advantages:

- Students discover that test performance is explained by more than whether or not they studied



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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



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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



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The Process

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



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The Process

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



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The Process

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



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The Process

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



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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



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Summary

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



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Summary

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



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Thank you!

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