

Can Blackboard Detect Cheating On Tests?

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I have no option but to give you a forthright and honest answer to your question, "**Can Blackboard Detect Cheating on Tests?**" The answer is, "No, Blackboards cannot detect cheating on tests." However, there are many ways and methods used by examiners and teachers to prevent or reduce cheating on a blackboard test.

To know how examiners work out ways to reduce cheating and how students attempt to overcome these hurdles, we need to know a little about how blackboard tests work, when are they used, and what all they can handle.

Let us learn a little more about Blackboard tests.

What and when are Blackboard tests used? – A Blackboard test allows the teacher or examiner to assess students' understanding of the course materials and what has been taught in the course. These tests can be conducted as pre-tests to understand what level of knowledge the student is at or as a means of reviewing the student's progress and comprehension.

What does Blackboard handle? – Blackboard is designed to handle quizzes, tests, grades, and homework too. It has user interfaces for both the teacher as well as the student with varying parameters depending on the needs. So, for example, a teacher's interface may not have the option to take a test while a student's interface may not have the option to create a test.

How do teachers and examiners prevent or reduce cheating on Blackboard tests?

While it is clear to you that blackboard cannot detect cheating on tests, there are ways and means which an examiner uses to prevent or mitigate cheating options. Driven by the need to preserve and maintain the integrity of student assessment programs, colleges employ various mechanisms to minimize cheating by students on blackboard tests.

Here are a few of them:

- *Mixing of objective and subjective questions* – It may be easy to cheat your way through objective questions such as fill in the blanks, true or false, multiple choice etc. However, a subjective question requires you to give

a slightly detailed and self-made answer. The answer you give reflects the depth of your understanding of the said topic. Cheating with subjective questions is far more difficult to do than in objective questions.

- *They use question pools* – Instead of having a fixed number of questions that remain unchanged for all students, test administrations use question pools. These question pools ensure that every student undertaking the test gets questions at a random and hence it is very difficult to use cheat mechanisms here.
- *Randomize the order of the questions* – Many examiners have the control of making the same set of questions come in a random order for each student. For example, Question no 9 for one student could be Question no 1 for another. Copying each other's answers will only boomerang and not be effective at all.
- *Limit Feedback* – When a student completes a blackboard test, he or she usually is given his or her score along with the following data:
 - Your answer
 - Correct answer
 - Feedback

Many students use the feedback information to eliminate the wrong options and thereby complete the assignment successfully (after repeated attempts) without actually understanding the topic at all. Moreover, students do not get motivated to study on their own as they find it easier to refer to lecturer's notes and getting to know the correct answer at the end of the test or question.

To avert this situation, examiners choose to limit the amount of feedback and/or give out correct answers. This compels the students to come prepared for the test.

- *Setting timed questions* – Unless you are quite thorough in the subject or topic, it is highly unlikely that cheating methodologies will be effective when answering timed questions. Hence, examiners find setting timed questions a great deterrent to cheating.

Why cheating in blackboard tests does not really work

It would be foolish for me to say that cheating in blackboard tests is not possible especially since I started this article by giving you an extremely honest answer. Yet, there are multiple technological innovations that examiners rely on to

discourage students from cheating in blackboard tests. Teachers and exam administrators are always on the lookout for ways and means to reduce cheating during blackboard tests. Here are a few of them:

Proctoring – If students take up blackboard exams from home, then it becomes difficult for the schools and colleges to verify the identity of the student. Hence, many colleges are hiring the services of a reliable third-party vendor who offers them proctoring services during an exam. These companies use a webcam to monitor the faces of both the students and their computer screens while the test is being taken. Moreover, before taking the test, the student requires to submit a copy of his or her ID card for verification to the proctoring agency.

Software for detecting plagiarism – nearly all learning management systems that colleges and schools use come with inbuilt plagiarism detection software and hence if you tried to copy/paste someone else's work, chances are very, very high for you to get caught and face disqualification and/or dismissal.

Devices to recognize keystrokes – The way and speed at which you strike the keyboard is recorded and saved and this information is used to check whether the person who completed the blackboard test was you or someone else on your behalf. Typing exercises are done by the students and parameters (such as speed and rhythm of typing) from these exercises are kept on record. Examiners then match this with the parameters taken from your test and if there is a mismatch, then you could be in trouble.

The psychology of cheating

It is a common belief that people taking blackboard tests are more likely to cheat than those taking offline (paper-based) tests. However, studies have revealed mixed results. Cheating is independent on the platform the examination or test is taken. It is more in the psyche of the student than anywhere else.

In fact, there is now concern among the stakeholders that the concept of cheating becoming embedded in the mind of the student happens in high school itself. There have been many surveys conducted on high school students with regard to cheating and there have been shocking results. In many of the results, nearly 70% of the students surveyed admitted to using some form of cheating including peeking into notes during a paper test, plagiarizing, or copying homework assignments.

Reasons to resort to cheating

- To get ahead in life easily
- Not being sufficiently prepared
- Disinterest in the learning process and hence no motivation to study
- Seeing others cheating and not facing any negative consequences
- When a student clears a course, nobody questions his or her methods employed
- Society seems to reward and applaud dishonesty

Whatever be the reason for cheating, students are of the opinion that if you do not get caught doing an immoral act, then it is not immoral and so it is with cheating in exams too. The question raised by you, "**Can blackboard detect cheating on tests?**" is sufficient proof that you are already scouting to see how you can overcome the detection process if it exists.

So, instead of sermonizing you on the bad effects of cheating, let me tell you again the answer to your question. The answer is an emphatic, "No, blackboard cannot detect cheating." Having said that, now that you are at the end of the article you would have read the different innovative mechanisms that exam administrators, teachers and educational institutions come up with to reduce and mitigate all forms of cheating.

If you think you are getting smart by overcoming cheating detection hurdles, you must also remember that your tutors and teachers were born before you and they could be smarter in finding ways to make detection possible or at least find ways to catch you red-handed. In the latter scenario, you really get to cut a sorry figure and your bright future could suddenly become dark; and all because you chose to find the easy path.

Another point I would like to make here is that if you are smart enough to overcome detection hurdles (which reflects a lot on your smartness level, I must admit), why can't you employ that intelligence to simply study well and come put in flying colors from college.

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