

Open book Tests

**That is a good book which is opened
with expectation and closed in profit.**

Amos Bronson Alcott
1799 - 1888, American

In an open book exam

you are evaluated on understanding rather than recall and memorization.
You will be expected to

- apply material to new situations
- analyze elements and relationships
- synthesize, or structure
- evaluate using your material as evidence

Access to content (books, notes, etc.) varies by instructor.
The exam can be take home or in the classroom
with questions seen or unseen before exam time

Do not underestimate the preparation needed for an open book exam: your time will be limited, so the key is proper organization in order to quickly find data, quotes, examples, and/or arguments you use in your answers.

Preparation:

- Keep current
on readings and assignments in class
- Prepare brief,
concise notes on ideas and concepts being tested
- Carefully select
what you intend to bring with you to the exam,
and note anything significant about what you do not
- Include your own commentary on the information
that will provide fuel for your arguments,
and demonstrate that you have thought this through
- Anticipate with model questions, but not model answers.
Challenge yourself instead with how you would answer questions,
and what options and resources you may need to consider.

Organize your reference materials, your "open book:"

Make your reference materials as user-friendly as possible so that you don't lose time locating what you need

- **Familiarize yourself**
with the format, layout and structure of your text books and source materials
- **Organize these with your class notes**
for speedy retrieval, and index ideas and concepts with pointers and/or page numbers in the source material
(Develop a system of tabs/sticky notes, color coding, concept maps, etc. to mark important summaries, headings, sections)
- **Write short, manageable summaries**
of content for each grouping
- **List out data and formulas**
separately for easy access

Test taking:

- **Read the questions carefully**
to understand what is expected.
Refer to our Guide on [Essay exam terms/directives](#)
- **Make good use of time**
Quickly review the number of questions and note how much time each could take.
First answer the questions that you are confident of and/or for which you will not need much time checking out the resources.
Leave more complex and difficult questions for later
- **Don't over-answer**
Aim for concise, accurate, thoughtful answers that are based in evidence.

Use quotations

- to illustrate a point, or act as a discussion point
- to draw on the authority of the source
- because you could not say it better

Quotations can be short

Three or four words can be extremely effective when they are worked into the structure of your sentence

A reference to a quote

may be as effective as the quote itself

Guard against over-quoting

It is your words and your argument;
extensive quoting may detract from your point or argument

Derived with permission from the [The Centre for the Development of Teaching and Learning](#), National University of Singapore

CongressLink: Bloom's taxonomy definition of learning (and testing!) categories