



The Last Question

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How does one construct a test that lessens the punishment for making errors (through the deduction of points), and at the same time engage students in learning and demonstrates to them that what they've learned from the coursework is important, too?



To these ends, the most important question that I ask on any exam is the final one: ***What have you learned that was not covered on the test? Prove it.*** Anyone who answers that question accurately can earn bonus points.

It's the most important question because it lets me:

- ▶ Ascertain what the student values.
- ▶ Reward the student for additional learning.
- ▶ Check for and correct misinterpretations.
- ▶ Lessen the punishment for material that was not or incorrectly learned the first time through.
- ▶ Recall interesting points that may have been made during the course but were labeled as core information.

The psychological benefits of such a question are enormous, both for the student and myself. My students feel that they have a say in the construction of the test, and that I recognize and appreciate the personal learning landscape of each student. (And I do!).

Even if this bonus question is weighted only heavily enough to slightly change the overall grade, it gives the student a sense of control even when working through the most grueling exams. It's the last and best question.