Tips for Preparing Tests

Class quizzes or tests are one of your best tools for assessing student mastery of objectives or checking for understanding. Just as for assignments, tests and quizzes should be built into the unit plan and should be aligned with homework and classwork assignments.

Some suggestion for using quizzes or test in your class:

- Use a series of mini-test that cover single objectives to help prepare the students for an end-of-unit comprehensive exam that covers several objectives.

- Take your own quiz or test before administering it.

- Help prepare students for standardized tests such as TAAS, ACP, SAT, Stanford 9, Aprenda, or RPTE by using a format similar to those tests. If students are more familiar with these formats, they are more likely to succeed on standardized tests.

- Make sure your test questions adequately reflect the skills and content of the lessons you have taught.

- Include a variety of question types on your test that include both objective and subjective answers.

- Use a variety of test-types in your classroom: oral response, group response, projects, etc.

- Show students how a test question works and occasionally have them create their own questions for a test.

- Minimize test questions that can be answered by pure memorization and include higher-order or thought questions on your tests as much as possible.

- Assign a point value to each question and indicate it by the question number on the test. This will help the students concentrate on the most important questions and make grading easier for you.

- When quizzes or test have been graded and returned, use them as a review of the material.

- To facilitate grading of class prep quizzes, have students exchange papers for grading/review.

- Try to keep your tests in computer files. It makes it much easier to vary the test from year to year.
• If your class does not perform well on a test, try not to jump to the conclusion that your students just aren’t smart.

Consider the following:
• Was it too long?
• Did the questions measure the objectives that were taught? (Validity)
• Were the questions designed to be straightforward or to “trick” the student?
• Were some questions too heavily-weighted or were the grading criteria too strict?
• If several different students/classes have trouble with the same test, you may have a problem with the test’s Reliability. This means that the test items need to be revised.
• Did the students seem not to know the material, or were they simply unable to understand the test questions as they were presented?