

Use unannounced quizzes to improve attendance and class preparation

Increasing students' attendance and class preparation is challenging, as other activities compete with students' time. Researchers report that classroom procedures having grade-related contingencies are effective in increasing attendance. The use of unannounced quizzes is especially effective because it is an application of intermittent reinforcement. Given the influence grades have on students' attendance and study behavior, it is tempting to assume course requirements contributing to a larger percentage of students' grades may be most influential in increasing course involvement. Results from classroom research suggest infrequent and minimal-weight unannounced quizzes (six quizzes together totaling only 3% of course grade) have a stronger influence on students' self-reported motivation to attend class and keep up with the assigned class material than a cumulative exam (worth 20% of course grade). The use of these quizzes has several benefits in addition to improving attendance and pre-class preparation, such as exposing students to exam-type questions, minimizing test-taking anxiety, providing immediate feedback on students' learning, and identifying areas of content difficulty to the instructor. An important added bonus is these quizzes are simple to implement and require minimal time both in and out of the classroom! Plus, the vast majority of students rated the use of these quizzes quite favorably!

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