

Quiz Design and Grading [rev. 9/18/08]

All your well-considered teaching objectives and your masterful classroom teaching can be completely undermined if you design poor "assessments," i.e., quizzes and tests and other assessment activities. But if your assessments are thorough, thoughtful, and well designed, they can be effective motivators for your students as well as measures of what they've learned. We'll talk about longer tests in the next lesson, where you'll also look at some sample tests and keys and design your own. But here let's discuss quizzes. Here's what my own beginning Latin syllabus says about course requirements, including quizzes (you can look over the entire syllabus and other ancillaries on [my website](http://www.classics.uga.edu/courses/latin/overview.html) at www.classics.uga.edu/courses/latin/overview.html), and while this is for a college class, the thinking behind these requirements applies (in my opine) to all levels:

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING: Regular attendance is absolutely essential; five-minute quizzes on current material may be expected daily, and tests are given every two-three weeks.

DAILY QUIZZES (3–5 lowest grades dropped, depending on the total number of quizzes given; no make-ups): 25%

Quizzes the first or second day on a new chapter typically test the new Wheelock vocabulary and the assigned sentence translations; second/third-day quizzes usually test new grammar and the assigned Wheelock and/or Groton reading passages.

HOOR-TESTS (no make-ups except with letter from physician): 50%

Given frequently, to check your progress and help you keep up; cumulative, though emphasis is on material presented since the last test; generally include dictation, translation, questions on grammar in the material translated, declensions, conjugations, short-answer questions on grammar, style, vocabulary, and English derivatives.

FINAL EXAMINATION (no make-up except with letter from physician): 25%

Cumulative and similar in format to the hour-tests.

As part of the daily schedule, the syllabus adds this regarding quizzes:

DAILY QUIZZES: Prepare as indicated above, i.e., vocabulary and P&R/SA or Wheelock passage(s) on the first day of a new chapter, new forms/syntax and reading passage(s) quiz on the second (and/or third) day. Practice each chapter's new material, using the Workbook for *Wheelock's Latin* and the Latin Flash Drill software, audio links, and Vocabulary Flash Cards or the Latin Vocab Drill software.

I don't actually give a quiz every day, but I "promise" one, reminding students each day in class about the content of the next day's quiz, and following up that afternoon with an e-mail. Typically, I'll administer only two or so quizzes a week, but the kiddies are always expecting one. The drop policy allows everyone to have a few "off" days, but I want these quizzes to be, first, motivators for them to keep up with the daily assignments in reading and new grammar and,

second, to be indicators for them of their level of mastery. Grade and return quizzes the very next day, and your objectives will be all the more fully achieved.

My "Day 1" quizzes include vocabulary and fairly straightforward items from the assigned Latin readings and translations that don't contain unduly complex examples of the new chapter's grammar, on the one hand, but which do contain some of the brand new vocabulary, aut sim., so that if they have not studied the new chapter, they will not get that coveted "A" on the quiz. Quizzes for the second or third day on a new chapter test new grammar—fair game, since they'll have had two nights to study it, plus the benefit of my pellucid (snicker!) explication on Day 1—and items from the assigned reading passage(s), usually something to translate, containing some of the new vocabulary and grammar, and comprehension questions to test whether they've thoughtfully read the entire passage. When I began consistently including on my quizzes questions on the sentence and passage readings and translations, I found the level of class preparedness for the actual reading/translation activity significantly improved. Nice to have quizzing lead directly to more successful class readings and discussions! Visit the course website for a look at some sample quizzes; and if you are already a teacher, send an e-mail to wheelocks@harpercollins.com and ask for access to the online "Teacher's Guide and Answer Key for *Wheelock's Latin*," where you can look at numerous quizzes for many of that book's lessons. The site also contains sample lesson plans, tests, worksheets, handouts, etc..

You'll be designing for this lesson's SCRIBITE assignment a quiz for each day of the two-day lesson plan you created in Lesson 5. Each quiz should be designed to take no more than five to ten minutes for students to complete; include in each all the items you consider appropriate, based on your lesson plan and our discussions of course objectives. Each quiz should show percentages/points for each item on a 100 point scale. (Some teachers use exotic systems, with things like 5 points total for a quiz, 20 for a test, 2,000 for the year; most students find this confusing, so stick to the 100-point standard.) You will also be asked to prepare an answer key for each quiz, i.e., a copy of the quiz with the answers inserted. As you design the quiz and key, you'll obviously need to think about how you'll grade it; keep it simple and clear: if there are 10 vocabulary items and, from the readings assigned for homework, a translation containing 15 words and two comprehension questions, consider counting the vocab items 5 points each = 50%, the translation 2 points per word = 30%, and the comprehension questions 10 points each = 20%, all totaling 100% and equally divided between vocab and reading/translation.

Your very best efforts in teaching and in designing and administering quizzes can be undermined by failures in grading. Use a clear, simple, rational grading system and explain it to your students. Also, don't forget to grade and return quizzes promptly, within a day or two at most. I usually distribute graded quizzes at the beginning of the period, with comments on how well students did (use lots of positive reinforcement in all your teaching activities: *Cotidie!*), but with a brief mention, too, of problem areas and what students might need to review—this is the purpose of frequent quizzing, of course, to give students prompt and detailed feedback on what they've mastered and what they haven't, as an incentive to their continued study and review.