

The purpose of school is to receive instruction, to practice and reinforce the learning with output (in-class work and homework) and to demonstrate “mastery” of the material - usually, with tests and ultimately, by grades. Obviously a concussion will affect mental efficiency, speed of input AND output, memory of material and will impact all three areas of: instruction, work output and tests/grades. The following information pertains to missed tests within the initial weeks following a concussion. For tips in all these areas, be sure to also read *GetSchooledOnConcussions.com*:

What To Do About ... Work Output? Issue #16

What To Do About ... Missed Instruction? Issue #18

**Student is newly concussed and has missed school and/or missed instruction**

Student will not be familiar with the material: taking a test would be unproductive, unfair and may provoke symptoms. Consider the “gift” of exempting from a test and forgiving the grade.

**Student has been newly/recently concussed and has been physically absent or cognitively unavailable to learn**

Student may not know, be unable to retain or unable produce material: taking a test may be unproductive, unfair and may provoke symptoms. Consider the “gift” of exempting from test and forgiving the grade.

**Student has been concussed newly/recently with some, but minimal, cognitive impact or was concussed weeks to months ago with some, but minimal, school or instruction missed and/or has now been back to school and available (physically and cognitively) to instruction**

Teacher will need to determine if there has been enough exposure of the material to fairly assess mastery of material with a test. If there is any doubt of exposure & the question is of mastery:  
**Consider:** Is there a creative way to assess mastery of material without a test?

**Consider:** Can the test be given in an altered fashion? i.e. multiple choice, or oral presentation instead of essay?  
Assign a project in place of a test?

**During initial concussion recovery, any testing/grades should focus on whether the student KNOWS the correct answer, not THE PROCESS the student used to demonstrate the correct answer.**

As the concussion heals over 3 to 4 weeks, it is OK for the student and the teacher to make a plan to “try and take a test”, in spite of parent and doctor notes to the contrary. The common MD suggestion of “NO testing” often goes into effect early in the concussion and is not applicable as the student recovers. Moreover, as the student gets better each day/week, it is the prerogative (indeed the obligation) of the teacher to allow the student to attempt more and more academics daily. However, before deciding if a student should try a test, the student and teacher must determine:

- Has the student been adequately exposed to the material?
- Was the student physically present in class?
- Was the student cognitively present in class?
- Was missed instruction caught up or taught via supplemental office hours?
- Does the student feel reasonably confident they know the material?
- Is the student minimally symptomatic?

If the answer is YES to all questions above, consider allowing the student to attempt the test.

Also consider: allowing the student to stop if symptoms flare significantly

AND/OR

Providing periods of testing followed by periods of rest (ie 30 minutes testing, 10 minutes rest)

AND/OR

Providing extended time

AND/OR

Allowing for a “do-over” if the test score suggests that, despite the best intentions, the student had to stop testing due to a flare up of symptoms AND/OR the student did not in fact have enough instruction or retention to attempt the test. ☺

*Parents and Students  
If you want your teachers to provide these “gifts”, read  
“What to Do About Missed Instruction”  
Issue #18*

**Student was concussed, is now fully healed but missed some tests during the recovery**

Teacher should decide: will making up “missed” tests at this point really increase mastery or grade?  
If **no**, taking “old” tests would be unproductive and will hamper student’s ability to focus on current instruction/learning. Do not penalize student’s grade for test not taken.  
If **yes**, can teacher work out a reasonable number of “make-up” tests so as not to interfere with student’s ability to focus on current instruction/learning?  
Adjust grades accordingly so student’s grades are not penalized for tests not taken.