

What are Exam Wrappers?

Exam wrappers are short, structured reflection tools that help students analyze their exam preparation, performance, and strategies for improvement. They guide students in becoming self-regulated learners by prompting metacognition about their study habits and exam results.

Why use Exam Wrappers?

Exam Wrappers encourage students to reflect on how they prepared and what worked or didn't, help students identify patterns in their mistakes, promote **growth mindset** and continuous improvement, foster accountability for learning strategies, and provide instructors with insight into student preparation practices.

When to use Exam Wrappers?

Exam Wrappers can be integrated into your course one or more times. Instructors can distribute Exam Wrappers with returned exams (or post online if digital) and then dedicate **5–10 minutes of class time** for completion. Once completed, collect them to review common challenges (optional) and return wrappers before the next exam to remind students of their reflection.

Learning Mindsets and Mindset GPS

Students' beliefs about themselves as learners and their learning environment.

Growth Mindset

The belief that abilities can be developed through effort, the use of effective strategies, and help from others when needed.

Purpose and Relevance

The belief that one's schoolwork is valuable because it is connected to a larger purpose and/or relevant to one's life.

Sense of Belonging

The belief that one is academically and socially connected, supported, and respected.

Quick Overview



Minimum Prep Time

15 minutes

For light customization of existing template



Minimum Class Time

5 minutes

For completion, not including explanation or discussion



Frequency

Routine

Can be distributed with each returned exam



Timing

Flexible

Dependent on the exam schedule for your course

Learning Mindsets Supported



*This resource predominantly supports **Growth Mindset***

[View the TBR Mindset Resource Repository](#)

[More Resources](#)



How to use an Exam Wrapper

Step 1: Create your exam wrapper template. See model on last page or websites listed under resources for further reading. If using the provided model, edit the content in brackets to customize to your course.

Step 2: Choose your method. Distribute printed copies when returning exams or create a survey (e.g., Survey Monkey, Google Forms, Microsoft Forms) to share with students.

Step 3: Distribute the exam wrapper immediately after returning graded exams (or within 1–2 days).

Step 4: Explain the purpose to students. See example script provided below.

Step 5: Ask students to complete the exam wrapper within one week of receiving their graded exam.

Step 6: Review student responses. Look for patterns in both the areas where students struggled and the areas where they succeeded. Use these insights to provide study tips and to guide future instruction.

Step 7: Reflect with students. As an optional step, you can follow up with a class discussion or offer individual feedback.

Step 8: Refine exam wrapper for future use and adjust instruction or provide additional resources if student responses suggest a need for it.

How to know it's working

You'll know the exam wrapper is effective if students show improved performance on later exams and more thoughtful self-reflections. Look for signs that they are adjusting study strategies based on their reflections. You can also ask for short feedback about the wrapper to see how helpful students find it.

How to adapt

- **By purpose:** Consider the benefits for various stakeholders, like helping **students** build better study habits and a growth mindset, enabling **instructors** to identify and address class-wide learning gaps, and supporting **advisors** or **tutors** in providing targeted interventions.
- **By type of class:** For large classes or online classes, use digital forms or learning management systems (Canvas, Blackboard, etc.) to make it easier to collect and review responses.
- **By format:** Use a mix of open-ended, multiple-choice, or checklist questions to help students quickly identify study strategies or common errors. Alternatively, have students discuss in small groups to compare exam prep approaches and share effective techniques.
- **By timing:** In addition to post-exam wrappers for reflecting on effective strategies and areas of struggle, consider pre-exam wrappers that prompt students to set study goals and identify planned strategies.
- **By including formal training in study strategies:** Offer a lesson on evidence-based study strategies, drawing on campus learning centers or resources like [Saundra McGuire's Teach Yourself How to Learn](#).

What to avoid

Avoid overwhelming students with too many questions, as this can lead to rushed or shallow responses.

Example Script to Introduce Exam Wrappers

Now that we've taken our exam, I want to give you a chance to reflect on your experience. Learning is a process of growth, and each exam shows where your effort and strategies are working and where you might benefit from trying new ones.

This reflection, called an exam wrapper, is designed to help you consider how you prepared, what worked well, and what you want to adjust moving forward. The goal is to remind you that skills and abilities are not fixed. They develop through effort, the use of effective strategies, and seeking help and feedback when needed. This reflection is about building on what you have done so far and setting yourself up for continued growth and success.

Resources for Further Reading

[Carnegie Mellon University: Exam Wrapper Templates](#)

[American Psychological Association: Pre/Post-Exam Wrapper Forms](#)

Gibbons, R. E., Hokien, D., Hutson, B. L., & Maness, H. T. D. (2025). The potential of exam wrappers in higher education assessment practice: Fostering self-efficacy through guided self-reflection. *Intersection: A Journal at the Intersection of Assessment and Learning*, 6(1), 80–127. <https://doi.org/10.61669/001c.129036>

Name:

Exam Wrapper

[Course] Exam Wrapper Reflection

This activity is designed to give you a chance to reflect on your exam performance and, more importantly, on the effectiveness of your exam preparation. Please answer the questions openly and honestly. Your responses will be collected to inform the instructional team about different student approaches and experiences surrounding this exam and how we can best support your learning.

They will have no impact on your grade.

- **What study strategies did you use to prepare for our exam? Check all that apply.**
 - A. [Name of learning activity]
 - B. [Name of learning activity]
 - C. [Name of learning activity]
 - D. [Name of learning activity]
 - E. [Name of learning activity]
 - F. Other (Please specify):

- **Looking back, which of your study strategies above were the most effective and/or least effective?**

- **Based on your responses to the questions above, name 3 things you will do differently in preparing for the next exam. For instance, will you just spend more time, change a specific study habit or try a new one (if so, name it), try to sharpen some other skill (if so, name it), or something else?**

- **What can you do to revisit material you struggled with and haven't mastered yet?**

- **What can we do to help support your learning and your preparation for the next exam?**