Avoiding Common Online Exam Issues

We want your online exam-taking experience to be as easy and stress-free as possible. Technical difficulties taking online exams are rare and with a little preparation you can avoid them and be prepared to handle any unexpected problems that do arise. Rest assured that even if something does go wrong, we have ways of reviewing what occurred in your exam session that will allow us to work with you and your instructor to ensure a fair outcome.

Below is some helpful advice on how to avoid the most likely issues and how to get help should an issue arise. We recommend that you print or otherwise note the important information in this document before beginning your exam just in case any issues arise.

This document is general advice for all Harvard Extension School proctored, timed, online exams. It does not set policies for how particular courses will handle exam issues. Please consult your course policies or teaching staff for further guidance on how issues with exams will be handled.

Avoid the Most Common Issues

Internet Connection Problems

As long as you have an active internet connection, Canvas auto-saves your responses in an exam a few times every minute. If your internet connection is lost, Canvas will warn you, but allow you to continue working on your exam. If the lost connection is brief, it's unlikely that you will lose all your work, or the evidence that you were doing work. However, a longer loss of connectivity or a very weak or unstable connection might jeopardize your exam. If your exam uses Proctorio, a lost internet connection may cause your Proctorio session to end or lock; in this scenario, you'll need to re-navigate to the the exam and "resume" to start a new Proctorio session.

To ensure that you do not lose your Internet connection during the exam, make sure that you use a high-speed, stable, non-shared connection and a stable, up-to-date computer. We recommend that you first take the practice Proctorio quiz provided in your course site using the Internet connection and computer you will be using for the exam. This will help verify that your connection and computer will work for the exam. To run both Proctorio and load the Canvas exam, we recommend at least 0.7 Mbps Internet speed and require a minimum of 0.3 Mbps. Test your current connection speed on the third party site speedtest.net.

If you are concerned that you cannot access a good enough Internet connection or computer during the exam window, please contact your instructor to make alternative arrangements for taking the exam.

Pre-Approved Time Extensions Not Properly Applied

We recommend that students who have been pre-approved for extra time on the exam verify that they have been granted the extra time before beginning the exam. The allotted time for the exam will appear on the exam instructions page.

If you have been approved for extra time but do not see it reflected on the exam instructions page, contact the [Accessibility Services Office](#) and your instructor to have the issue corrected before beginning the exam.

What To Do If Something Goes Wrong

Sometimes the unexpected and improbable does happen. Here's what you can do to make it easier for us and the teaching staff to help you recover from an exam issue.

1. Immediately and email a copy of the current state of your exam to a member of the course teaching staff with a brief explanation of the problem you are experiencing so they have a reliable record of when the problem occurred. The teaching staff may not be able to provide technical support or to respond immediately, but they will need as reliable a record of your work as possible as they consider the options for ensuring you a fair outcome.
2. The Harvard Extension School help desk is trained in technical issues with exams and may be able to help you in real-time. The help desk is open many hours, but not 24/7. If you are concerned about the possibility of technical difficulties you may wish to plan to take your exam during hours when the help desk is open.
3. If possible, complete your exam during your allotted time, offline if necessary, and email it to the teaching staff during that time or as soon after as possible.
4. Contact Canvas Support by phone or chat at any time, 24/7 through the Canvas help menu. They can verify what Canvas has recorded if you're not sure if your exam was saved.
5. If you have grounds to appeal for a makeup exam during a midterm, like missing an exam due to a medical emergency or military action, first consult your course's makeup exam policy and then contact course staff. If you have grounds to appeal for a makeup exam for a final exam, you must file a formal appeal with the [Exams Office of Academic Appeals](#).
6. If you lost time on your exam and/or were unable to submit it through Canvas, contact the help desk. We have ways of reviewing your exam sessions to verify your problem and will work with you and your instructor to identify fair options, such as granting a second attempt or extra time to complete your exam.