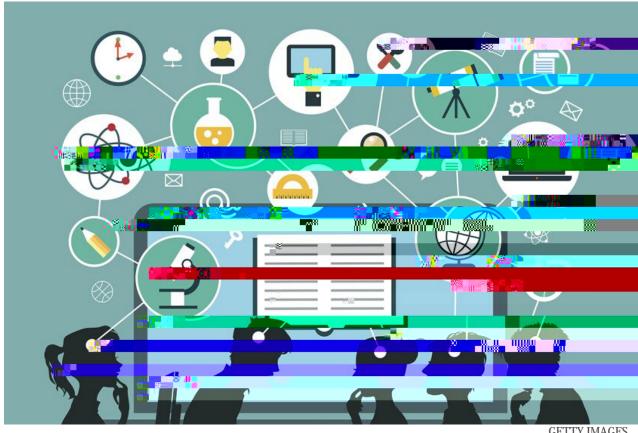# 7 Ways to Assess Students Online and Minimize Cheating

What can you do to promote academic integrity in your virtual classroom without joining the 'arms race' in cheating-prevention tools?

By [Flower Darby](#)

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How can you make sure your online students take tests without cheating? It's one of the most-frequent questions asked by new online instructors and even some experienced ones. The short answer: You can't.

You might be tempted to join the "arms race" in cheating-prevention tools, or to adopt punitive approaches such as [proctored online exams](#) and [time limits](#) for online tests.

Assess learning in online discussion forums. Don't overlook the potential of online discussion forums as a valuable yet low-stakes source of feedback on whether students are learning the material.

Structure your discussion questions in ways that unearth what students know about a topic. Use the "post-first" setting to require students to submit their responses before they can read what others hav

- Can students choose to either write a paragraph or present a bulleted list to summarize a reading or video?
- Can they video-record themselves performing a new dance step, musical challenge, or theatrical skill, or can they write about their process of practicing that new skill?
- How about giving them a choice between a two-paragraph written journal entry or a 90-second recorded reflection?

As we all work to improve our online teaching, we have the opportunity to rethink practices we've relied on for years in our physical classrooms. If monitoring in-person tests has been a mainstay of your approach, never fear. The silver lining of the pandemic is the chance to think in new ways about how you teach, how students learn, and how they show it.