

# Math Test Reflection Essay

**Educator:** Mike Kenyon, Faculty, Mathematics

**Context:** Out of class; MATH 141 Pre-Calculus

**Keywords:** mathematics, essays

**Student Activity Time:** 30 minutes

*After completing an exam, students wrote a reflection essay about how the test went.*

## Introducing the Reflection Activity

One way to prompt students to think about their test performance is to simply ask for their first response to the test and their score. An educator used post-exam essays to prompt students to reflect on and articulate their reactions about the exam and their score. The purpose of this activity is to assist students in verbalizing their concerns, thoughts, and reactions to their graded exam.

The educator administered the regularly scheduled math exam, graded it, and returned the test to students with a solution key. The educator offered students a chance to earn a small portion of their homework grade by completing an essay about how the exam went and their reactions to it. The educator required students to write at least one double-spaced, typed page for their essay. Students often turned in reworked problems with the essay. The educator then graded the student's submission and included a short 2-3 sentence response to their essay. The response generally included validation, answers to open questions, or recommendations that would assist the student in the future.

The educator used the information shared in the students' essays in individual interactions with them, either in class or during office hours. When multiple students expressed similar concerns, the educator chose to respond to those concerns in class. As a result, students experienced an opportunity to articulate their successes, misconceptions and errors on the exam. Students often take action based on the educator's response and suggestions, such as visiting office hours or the tutoring center to improve future exam performance.

## Recreating the Reflection Activity

Description	
1	Administer, grade, and return student exams.
2	Provide a brief overview of the assignment and give a due date shortly after the exam is returned.
3	Collect student exam essays, grade, and provide short feedback.
4	Return graded exam essays to students.

### **In the words of the Educator: Tips and Inspiration**

*Anything worthwhile takes a little time.* Let's be honest about the time that's involved. After you grade the test, you have to take time to read and comment on the essays. It's probably worth it, but you want to account for that in deciding to do this activity and for it to work.

*Ask students to return the test with the essay.* It's not required, but I do ask the students to attach a copy of their test so that I know what they are referring to. I can make more useful comments to them if they give me the test and I know what they're talking about.

*What was the inspiration for the reflection activity?* I heard about this idea at a conference or read about it in a journal. After a while, I just stopped doing the essay activity and a couple years ago I was at a conference where people were making a sports analogy to taking math classes. When you're an athlete, you watch the film to study the game; well, this essay is the film study. You don't just play a game and not learn anything from it, so that reminded me to put it back into use.