



STRIVE FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS
WITH TLC

Revision Strategies for Timed Online Assignment (TOA): A Guide for Students



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Defining TOA – What is it?

A Timed Online Assignment (TOA) is an open-book exam to be completed at home or at a place of your convenience. There is a time limit imposed whereby the TOA questions will be released to you at a specific time and you are to complete the TOA and submit it by the time imposed.

Preparations before TOA

Just like closed-book end-of-course exams, there are things you can prepare before the TOA. These are some things you can do beforehand.

Find out about the TOA format

A TOA is like a TMA in the sense that you access the questions and submit the completed TOA via Canvas Turnitin. However, TOA is also like an open-book exam because you are to complete the TOA within the usual time allocated for exams.

Just like any TMA or exams, it is important to find out about the type of questions expected in a TOA. Usually, open-book exams, like the TOA, will not contain questions that assess your memory skill. Instead, expect essay-style questions that require you to apply knowledge. Your instructors may set questions based on a scenario or a problem for you to show critical thinking, apply your knowledge or to solve problems. Be prepared to write well-presented and well-structured answers, arguments or solutions.

Things to find out about the TOA format:

- The number of sections in the TOA
- The type of questions (e.g., essays, short answers, etc.)
- Whether there are optional questions or all questions are compulsory
- Whether there is a need to provide in-text citation and a reference list/bibliography

Preparations before TOA

Gather materials to support your TOA

The advantage of a TOA is that you can refer to any materials to help you answer the questions. However, as you only have limited time to complete the TOA, you should not waste time on finding the material but to gather all your materials you may want to refer to beforehand.

Materials you should have it readily accessible during your TOA include:

- Readings, textbooks, study guides
- Lecture/seminar slides
- Your notes
- Website links to reliable resources related to your course
- Equipment like calculators, power cable, etc.
- Reference style guides
- Any other relevant course materials

Study for TOA

Many students have the misconception that open-book exams, like TOA, require minimum revision because the course materials can be referred to any time during exam, and in this case, while completing the TOA.

An open-book assessment format only means that you do not have to spend time memorizing information. However, you still need to study and to understand concepts and theories so that you can apply them during the assessment time. The limited time imposed on TOA means that there is no time to “figure things out”.

In fact, you need to be very familiar with the content and materials so that you can quickly find and refer to them during TOA. You should not copy and paste information directly from the textbook, readings, notes or other online sources because this is plagiarism. Moreover, with application-type questions expected in TOA, you will need to interpret and structure your answers to the question demand, whereby direct copying will not be possible because there is a need to re-structure the content to come up with a targeted answer. Only by studying can you apply your knowledge more efficiently.



Preparations before TOA

Make notes for TOA

As you are studying for your TOA, or for any type of exams, it is important to take notes. For TOA, the benefit of notetaking also includes increased efficiency during TOA whereby you do not waste precious time looking for information – making notes increases your familiarity with the content, which makes finding the information during TOA faster.

Some suggestions for making notes:

- Use sticky notes to index your textbook and other course materials. For a quicker reference, write down the key concepts or ideas on the sticky notes before using them as index.
- Tab the Table of Content of your textbook so that you can quickly look up the table to find the relevant information within the textbook.
- Summarize key ideas and concepts of the course. In the summary, include page reference or references to where the extended, full version can be found.
- Colour-code your index for quicker referencing – you may want to organize your notes by topics.
- Draw out the connections and relationships between topics and concepts – this will provide a head start for analyzing and synthesizing key learning points of the course.

For those of you using e-textbooks, you can use the highlight and notetaking functions to make notes. The bookmark function will be useful serving as tabs or sticky notes. Hence the suggestions above are applicable to e-textbooks.



What to do during TOA

You have gathered your course materials, make notes, and found out about the format of your TOA. You are now fully prepared. Here are some more suggestions to help you ace your TOA.

Your “exam hall”

Create a conducive place for you to attempt your TOA. An ideal place will be somewhere that is quiet with enough space to spread your course materials and notes for easy access and reference. Make sure there is a power plug and power points readily available to charge your laptop or any devices you may be using for your TOA.

Keeping time

Keeping time is equally important for TOA, just like for closed-book exams. Make sure you have a time management plan for your TOA, for example, 30-minutes limit for each question, and that you keep to it.

Students may be tempted to include long quotations or copy chunks of information from course materials in the answers. This takes up a lot of time and may not be as helpful to producing targeted answers. Remember, copying chunks of information, even with citations provided, is also a form of plagiarism. Instead, aim to paraphrase and be concise with your answers. This is where your prepared notes become important – if you have already learnt, paraphrased and summarized key concepts and idea during revision, you can easily and quickly refer to these notes and adapt them for your TOA.

Remember, even though TOA is an open-book type of assessment, there is no time to learn new things during TOA. Hence, there is still a need to revise and review your course material before your TOA. One last reminder – remember to save your work as you are working!



Summary of Dos and Don'ts

DOs	DON'Ts
Find out details about the format of your TOA (e.g., are there optional questions or are all questions compulsory)	Expect to have time to study during TOA
Find out whether there is a need to provide in-text citations and reference list/bibliography	Copy or "cut and paste" chunks of content directly into your answers
Familiarize yourself with your course materials so that you can refer to them easily and quickly during TOA	Start your exam without planning how much time to spend on each question
Study for your TOA by making notes	Forget to save your work



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