

Spotlight on: Mastering Implementation

How can students be held accountable for coming to class prepared?

How can instructors use pre-lecture assignments to prepare for class?

At the [University of North Florida](#), the General Chemistry instructor gives multiple types of Mastering™ homework, including pre-lecture assignments. Prior to class, he reviews the diagnostics from the pre-lecture assignments to:

- Understand where students struggled;
- Prioritize lecture topics; and
- Plan in-class activities to address challenging concepts.

Students should then be better prepared to attempt post-lecture assignments. <https://bit.ly/2q7XoE3>

What are some ways to implement pre-lecture homework?

A Mastering best practice is to assign more frequent, shorter assignments, and adding pre-lecture homework is one way to do this. While pre-lecture homework content may differ depending upon the course, many instructors are utilizing Dynamic Study Modules, tutorial problems, or short reading quizzes with the goal of introducing students to the main concepts. It's recommended that pre-lecture assignments be limited to 30–60 minutes. Some instructors give students unlimited tries to continue practicing, while other instructors limit attempts to assess reading comprehension.

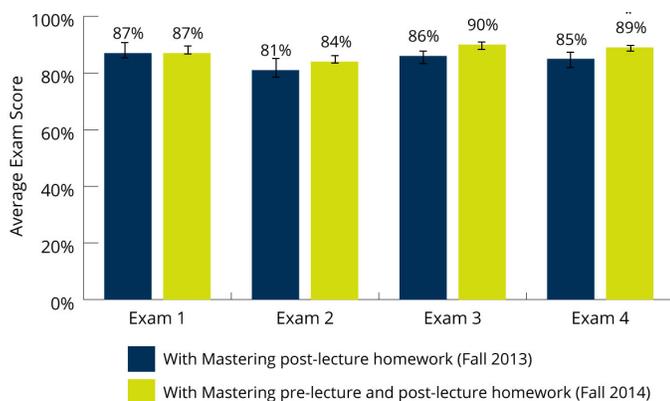


Figure 1. Average Exam Scores, Fall 2013 (n=50) and Fall 2014 (n=88)

At [Vanderbilt University](#), the Statics instructor was assigning Mastering post-lecture chapter problems for homework. After implementing pre-lecture Mastering assignments comprised of tutorial problems, students performed better on exams (figure 1).

<https://bit.ly/2qarw1L>

What feedback do students have about doing pre-lecture homework?

At the [State University of New York, College of Environmental Science](#), the General Biology instructor implemented pre-lecture Mastering assignments to address student unpreparedness. Assignments ranged from 10 to 20 questions, with a mix of question types and difficulty levels, and sometimes included content from multiple chapters. An assignment was designed to take 25–60 minutes to complete. At the end of the semester, students provided this feedback:

"I did Mastering Biology work before the lecture so I could go [to class] knowing what was going on. It helped my grade a lot."

"The preassignments were a big help. They enabled us to listen to the lecture with some prior understanding."

"Always do Mastering Biology homework. Even though it can be a pain, it really helps reinforce what's taught in lecture."

The instructor summed it up by saying, "Before adoption of Mastering Biology, I entered the classroom each period only to be met by a sea of faces that clearly had no idea what I was talking about. Since adoption of Mastering Biology and implementation of pre-lecture homework assignments, students are noticeably more engaged during lectures, and classes are more interactive." <https://bit.ly/2q8lZla>

"The increase in student success shows that students are learning more; end-of-course student survey responses indicate that they recognize and appreciate the value of using Mastering Biology."

—Melissa Fierke, State University of New York, College of Environmental Science

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