Canvas: How “Partial Credit with Penalty” Is Scored in Canvas Quizzes

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How “Partial Credit with Penalty” Is Scored in Canvas Quizzes

Some quiz questions allow you to select more than one answer and use a scoring method called Partial Credit with Penalty. This article explains how your score is calculated and why selecting extra answers can lower your points.

What does “Partial Credit with Penalty” mean?

- You earn points for selecting correct answers
- You lose points for selecting incorrect answers
- Guessing is discouraged, because wrong choices reduce your score

This method rewards accurate knowledge, not just selecting many options.

How Canvas calculates your score

1. Each answer choice has equal value
    - The total points for the question are divided evenly across all answer choices (both correct and incorrect).
2. Correct selections add points
    - Each correct answer you select adds its share of points.
3. Incorrect selections subtract points
    - Each incorrect answer you select subtracts the same amount of points.
4. Your final score reflects both accuracy and selectivity
    - Selecting incorrect answers can cancel out points earned from correct ones.

With *Partial Credit with Penalty*, Canvas uses this formula:

$$\text{Score} = \left(\frac{\text{Correct Selected} - \text{Incorrect Selected}}{\text{Total Correct Answers}}\right) \times \text{Total Points}$$

Penalties are applied **before** partial credit is calculated.

Example

- Question total: 4 points
- Total answer choices: 5
- Correct answers: 3
- Student selected:
    - ✅ 2 correct answers
    - ❌ 2 incorrect answers

Because the student selected the same number of correct and incorrect answers, much of the earned credit was offset by penalties. Canvas then awarded partial credit based on how many of the correct answers were identified overall, resulting in 1.33 out of 4 points.

Key takeaways for students

- ✅ Select answers only if you are confident they are correct
- ❌ Selecting extra answers “just in case” can lower your score
- ✅ Fewer, accurate selections are often better than many guesses

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Tip for success

Before submitting:

- Double check that each selected answer is truly correct
- If unsure about an option, it may be better not to select it

This scoring method is designed to reflect how well you understand the material—not how many options you choose.

Have questions? Please submit a ticket to COM HelpDesk