Getting Started with Blackboard

Introduction

This document is intended to give instructors new to Blackboard, a quick, visual guide to setting up their first course on Blackboard.

Login

Go to blackboard.stthomas.edu. The login to Blackboard displays. Log-in with your UST Username and Password.

Open a Course

Click on a course link.
1. **Navigation “Breadcrumb.”** Shows location within the course structure.
2. **Edit Mode.** Allows you to toggle between an instructor view and a student view. Edit mode needs to be on in order to add or edit content. Click to turn it off in order to view course as a student.
3. **Content Frame.** Shows the content in the selected course location.
4. **Course Menu.** Customizable menu structure for your course.
5. **Course Management Controls.** Tools for administering and adding functionality to your course. Students do not see this.
Working with Content

This section will describe the basics of adding content to your Blackboard course.

Adding Content Areas

Your content areas are “containers” to hold the different types of content you’ll be using in your course. The names of these containers will be the links you, and students, will see as clickable menu items.

A simple, but intuitive, menu might include.

- **Announcements** – For posting announcements to students. This displays by default.
- **Syllabus** – For posting the course syllabus.
- **Weekly Topics** – For posting course lecture notes and materials, which can be organized by subfolders if desired.
- **Assignments** – For posting assignments.
- **Tools** – For communicating via email, bulletin boards, blogs or wiki with instructors and classmates.
- **Groups** – For setting up and accessing group assignment pages and tools.
- **Grades** – For posting / viewing student grades.

You can add the Syllabus, Course Materials and Assignments content area by selecting Create Content Area but there is a special way to add Tools, Groups and Grades content links. The will be described in a later section.
Rearranging, Renaming, Hiding and Deleting Content Areas

To rearrange:

1. Click the reorder button
2. Select the item and use the arrow keys to move it up or down.

To delete, rename or hide the content area:

1. Hover over the navigation item until you see the yellow arrow appear. Press on the yellow arrow and drag the item upward and place it.
2. Hover your mouse over the Syllabus and then click the down arrow. Select the appropriate menu option.

Caution: Deleting the content area will delete the content of the pages except for any documents you have attached. These documents will still be available in the courses Course Files area. This is found under the Control Panel > Files (see screenshot above in bottom left corner).

Hiding the content area will remove it from the student view. This is helpful when you’re creating areas for exams or other content that you don’t want students to have access to until a later time. When you are ready to make it available, you can use this same menu to Show the Link.
1. **List View** – This is the default view of the navigation.
2. **Folder View** - You may find it helpful to view the structure of your course in Folder View.
3. **Pop-up Window View** – The navigation will display in a new window.
4. **Refresh** – This will refresh the navigation.

**Adding Simple Content**
Common content items include:

- **Item.** To create a content item on the page that can include text, file attachments and embedded links or media files.
- **File.** To add an attached document. There is no ability to provide a description for the document. Creating an Item is recommended instead.
- **Audio / Image / Video / URL.** To add these file types and descriptive or instructive text in a content frame. You can also add audio, images, videos and urls directly into an Item as well.

### Create a Content Item

- Select **Item** from Build Content menu, as shown in the screenshot above.
- Attach your syllabus file and some content.
- Click submit when you are done.

1. **Content Information**

   ![Content Information](image)

   - **Name:** Syllabus
   - **Color of Name:** Black
   - **Text:**
     
     Here is the syllabus for the semester. Please print this out and bring it to class.

   ![Text Editor](image)

   - **Path:** /  
   - **Words:** 0

2. **Attachments**

   - If you select a file, you do not want, click Do Not Attach to remove the attachment from the content item. The file itself is not deleted.

3. **Standard Options**

   - Permit Users to View this Content
   - Track Number of Views
   - Select Date and Time Restrictions

4. **Submit**

1. **Preview Content** – Preview content before submitting it.
2. **Help/Information** – Displays helpful information about the text editor.
3. **Full screen** – Click this to toggle to a full screen view of the text editor. This will give you more space if you are adding a lot of content.
4. **Arrow Icons** – Toggle to display full set of icons in the text editor.
5. **Hyperlink icons** – Use these icons to add and break hyperlinks in your text.
6. **File** – Use this icon to add a link to a file within your text. Or you can attach a file in **Step 2 Attachments** (see screenshot above).
7. **Image** – Add an image.
8. **Media** – Add a video.
**Student View**

This is what your students will see when they navigate to the Syllabus.

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**Editing/Removing Content**

When you delete attached content from your course, a copy of the attachment is still stored in the Blackboard Files area for the course. To locate the Files, go to the Control Panel (in the left navigation), select Files > Your Course.
Organizing Your Content

It will be helpful to you, and your students, to have an organizational structure for your main course content. Many instructors like to organize the main content into folders by week or topic. This way, all assignments, quizzes, videos, files or other instructional materials pertaining to the week or topic can be located in one place for the students.
Working with Different Types of Content

Once you have an intuitive navigational structure set up, you can begin adding a wide variety of media to your course topics and lessons. Again, it will be helpful to you and your students to think through how you want to organize the content within a week / topic / folder. Examples:

**Week or Topic Folder Contents (1x week class)**
- Learning Objectives
- Readings and Assignments
- Lecture Slides
- Additional Resources

**Week or Topic Folder Contents (multiple day/week course)**
- Day 1 (Date)
  - Learning Objectives
  - Readings and Assignments
  - Lecture Slides
  - Additional Resources

Below, we'll organize the first week's content in its folder. Start by:

1. Selecting the folder you want to add content into.
2. Selecting Build Content > Item
3. Adding a name, description and format the content.

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1. **Content Information**

   ![Content Information](image)

   - Name: Learning Objectives
   - Color: Black

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*Describe some of the historical perspectives in the field.*
*Describe the 10 basic steps of the special education process. Complete a Blackboard quiz.*
*Describe some of the contemporary issues in the field: public's perception of disability, inclusion, accessing the general ed and modifications.*
*Identify the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) as a leading organization in the field of special education.*
*Define the importance of the CEC Ethical Principles for Special Education. Complete Voice thread Reflection.*
Embed Content in an Item

You can embed hyperlinks, documents, images and media within an item using the tools in the Text Editor. Below, we’ll embed a hyperlink.

We’ve added the week 1 lecture file below by selecting Build Content → File.

Adding Course Files Content

Up until now, we have attached files from a computer to the course. When we do this, Blackboard creates a copy of the file. This copy remains even if you delete an item that includes the content. You can get to copies of this content in your current course.
Most content editing screens have a button for “Browse Course.” This will allow you to view all of the files stored from your course including word, powerpoint, pdf, video and image files.

This window will open when you select to Browse Course. You can select any of the files from the list and click the “Submit” button (not pictured below). You can also upload additional files directly to this repository or perform and advanced search to locate files.

Course files are also accessible from the left navigation under the Control Panel > Files > Your course name.
Tools

By default, a Tools link will display in your course navigation. Clicking on this link will allow you, and students, to see links to many of the tools available in Blackboard.

Seeing all these options can be confusing for students so we’d recommend hiding all but the tools you plan to use in the course.

Hiding Tools
If you turn **Edit Mode** to off (upper right corner of screen), you can see the much-simplified student view.

**Adding Tool Links in Course Menu**

You can also add individual tools directly to the Course Menu. We’ll add a tool link for students to access their grades, a common request from students. First, make sure that the “My Grades” tool is showing to students on the Tools page. If you look at the screenshot above, you’ll see it.

1. Click the “+” icon, and select Tool Link.

2. Type a name for the link and check the “Available” box. Select “My Grades” tool from the menu.

A My Grades link now displays in the Course Menu. Students can now access their grades in the Grade Center.

**Note:** If you as the instructor click the My Grades link, you see a message, “**Users with your role do not have personal grade.**” Instructors always access the Grade Center via the **Course Management Control Panel** to manage course grading.
Complete the Course

You can continue to add and rearrange your course content. You don’t have to add everything all at once – you can certainly add content as you progress through the course.

When you are happy with the course, you may want to create your first announcement. It’s good practice to create announcements when you have added materials for students or just want to pass along important information or instructions.

Create an Announcement
You now have created a simple course in Blackboard