



Building a Blackboard Course Web Site Checklist

A Blackboard Tip Sheet

Transferring the classroom-based model of learning to the Internet-based model can be difficult for instructors new to online learning. This tip sheet will serve as a checklist for instructors when creating a Blackboard course Web site. It will provide instructors with a basic guide to create and manage a course Web site.

- ❑ General
 - Student information
 - ❑ Provide students with an overview and/or orientation of your course Web site.
- ❑ Content management
 - Planning
 - ❑ Plan out the placement of your materials before you start creating documents in Blackboard. Decide the hierarchy of folders you plan to use so you can create the folder structure before adding documents to them. Try to keep your folder depth to a maximum of 3-4 so students can find material easily.
 - Announce
 - ❑ Use the announcements feature consistently to inform students when content is added or changed.
 - Structure - using a course template
 - ❑ Using a template can enhance student navigation by keeping the “roads” to your content clear and consistent. It can also decrease the management time necessary when creating or uploading documents. Many institutions will have templates or requirements for organization and delivery of course material. Check with your local Blackboard system administrator for template information.
 - Adding Content
 - ❑ When adding course content, give clear explanations describing what each item is, what programs are necessary to access it, and how it fits in with the overall goals of the lesson.
 - ❑ Give comprehensive descriptions with each online assignment indicating the relevance to the classroom-based course component and corresponding materials.
 - ❑ Give placement cues directing students to related assignments, readings, web sites or course documents.
 - Evaluation
 - ❑ Evaluate student use of your course throughout the semester by creating a student survey in the Assessment Manager.
 - ❑ Check the Course Statistics in the *Control Panel* consistently to see when and how often your students are accessing your course.

- Secure settings
 - Enable/disable buttons
 - Limit access to areas of your course to **enrolled** students by disabling buttons from the navigation area. In the *Control Panel*, click on **Course Settings** and choose *Area Availability*. You can disable/enable buttons, and rename button titles by selecting from the drop-down menu.
 - Course material
 - In the *Area Availability* area, you can also secure areas of your course from users on your Blackboard installation who are **not enrolled** in your course, or previewing the course as a **guest**. Student Tools, Communication areas and Announcements are automatically set to their defaults, but you may secure any other navigation area by selecting the appropriate box.
- Interactivity
 - Asynchronous
 - Require students to participate in discussion board forums. Students can do this with the entire class or with specific students through the Groups feature.
 - Have students hand in assignments to you through the digital dropbox.
 - Synchronous
 - Require students to participate in a virtual chat. Students can do this with the entire class or with specific students through the Groups feature.
 - Remember that some students may not be as comfortable in synchronous communication as others, so keep chat size manageable. A recommended size is 3-7 students.
 - Groups
 - Enroll students into groups to focus on interactivity among a smaller number of students, or to work collaboratively on projects.
 - Office hours
 - Have specific online office hours for students who feel more comfortable communicating in the online environment or for whom it's more convenient.
 - External resources
 - Provide students with external resources or web sites (through the External Links area, or the Blackboard Resource Center), and tie them to your course assignments.
- User management
 - Student roles
 - Understand the different roles that can be assigned to students, *course builder, grader, or teaching assistant*, so you may have some student assistance if necessary.
 - Email addresses
 - Make sure that all of your students have/keep updated email addresses so they can always receive email sent through Blackboard.

- Hints and help
 - Icebreaker activity
 - Include an icebreaker activity for students who may be new to the online learning environment. A simple activity might be for students to create a student homepage, participate in a fun discussion board, or deliver a document through the digital dropbox.
 - If you know that you will have documents that require the user to have a software application to open them, have a folder that contains links to *Plug-ins, Players and Viewers*. A simple way to find most software plug-ins is to visit the software company's website and search through their available downloads.

For more educational materials about Blackboard products visit the [Training Center](http://trainingcenter.blackboard.com)
(<http://trainingcenter.blackboard.com>)

