10 Easy Steps to Creating Your Online Course

A Blackboard Tip Sheet

Taking your course online may seem like a daunting task, but it can be simple. Just follow these 10 easy steps, and you'll be on your way to creating a successful online component for your course.

1. Prepare Yourself

- Educate yourself by reading articles about web-based training, instructional design, technology education, and online learning.
- Practice using the software. Take a training course, do a tutorial, or explore the program.
- Locate and introduce yourself to the Blackboard System Administrator on your campus.
- Ask the System Administrator to create (or help you create) a user account, password, and a blank course Web site for you.
- Understand hardware and software specifications. Make sure your computer is set up with the correct requirements (such as browser). Again, refer to your System Administrator if you need assistance.

2. Prepare Your Materials

- Gather your course materials and content in a central location. Include items such as handouts, slide shows, syllabus, overheads, lecture notes, projects, assessments, and discussion topics.
- Determine what formats your materials exist in. Take note of items already in electronic formats such as word processing documents, spreadsheets, and slides.
- Accommodate different types of learners. Make sure visual learners have graphics and text they can see to foster learning. Provide narration and text for verbal learners.
- Identify measurable course objectives. These should incorporate materials delivered both in class and online. Determine what core competencies and knowledge students will need to meet these objectives.

3. Make an Outline

- Make an outline that matches each course component with associated date, lecture materials, labs, assignments and corresponding items. This comprehensive outline can be very helpful in Step 5 – Building a Course Skeleton.

4. Determine How To Deliver Materials

- Determine which materials should be delivered in the face-to-face component of your course (if your course has one) and which items can be delivered online. Select items that are relevant to course objectives and student learning experiences.
- Prepare the materials for electronic delivery. This may include scanning graphics, creating files in a word processor, developing web pages in a web authoring tool, or creating slides in presentation software. If necessary, consult your System Administrator for assistance and advice.
- Avoid delivering materials that will distract the student from the course objectives. Do not add irrelevant information to "fill-up" your website.

5. Build a Course Skeleton

- Create the organizational (or skeleton) structure of your course. This involves creating a series of clearly labeled folders that will hold course materials.
- Make a folder for every item in your outline (from Step 3) or mimic the structure of your syllabus.
- Enter the Course Information area and create folders for the Syllabus, Grading Policies, and other basic items relating to course management.
- Enter the Course Documents area and create folders that correspond with the main topics or sections of your course. Create sub-folders for sub-topics as necessary. For example:
  Week 1: Introduction to English Grammar, (folder)
  Week 2: Working with Nouns (folder)
  Week 3: Mastering Verb Tenses (folder)
  	Regular Verbs, (sub-folder of Week 3)
  	Irregular Verbs (sub-folder of Week 3)
- Enter the Assignments area, and create folders that correspond with your assignments.

6. Add Staff Information

- Enter the Staff Information content area and create an entry for yourself. If you have a picture of yourself, include that too!
- Create additional entries for teaching assistants, graduate assistants, guest speakers or other course staff members.

7. Fill in the Content

- Enter each folder and add the content.
- Include a short description for each item. Indicate what the item is and how it is relevant to the lesson. This description helps students understand how to associate (frame/attend to) this item in relation to rest of the course materials.

8. Incorporate the Technology into Other Course Components

- Enter the Discussion Board, create a Forum, and post an introductory assignment. For example, you might ask each student to write one to three paragraphs explaining who they are and why they took your course. Require students to read entries from other students. You might also encourage them to respond to each other. This is the first step in creating an "online community" for your course.
- Plan on adding at least one new topic to the Discussion Board Forum each week. Make sure this topic requires students to formulate an answer and back it up with facts to demonstrate their understanding. Monitor and respond to student threads and encourage students to do the same.
- Locate at least three external websites that relate to information you are teaching. Place these in the External Links area and recommend students explore these sites on "virtual fieldtrips." Optionally, structure an assignment that incorporates researching and reporting information from these fieldtrips. Also, consider placing links to the download pages of any plug-ins, players, readers, or viewers that are necessary to access the various kinds of files or multimedia your are using in your course.

9. Create an Introductory Announcement

- Post an introductory message in the announcements area. Welcome the students to your course, direct them to the Course Information area to obtain the syllabus, and indicate the location of the first class assignment or reading.

10. Complete the Process

- Preview course materials by checking each link, proofreading descriptions, and viewing the course from a student perspective.
- Instruct students on how to get a Blackboard account and log in. Consult your System Administrator for university-specific instructions.
- Enjoy teaching your first online course!

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