



# Blackboard Quick Start Guides Organizing Your Course

Creating an online course where users spend their time engaged in learning and interaction relies on establishing a course structure where content is easy to identify, navigation is intuitive, and tool placement fits in logically with the course design. Organizing all the elements of an online course so that students and instructors consistently have a positive experience requires up-front planning and ongoing adjustments throughout the run of the course.

## ISSUES AND ANSWERS

**Issue:** Students are having a hard time finding tools and content in the course.

**Answer:** Navigate as a student would to “test” your folder structure in your course. Turn off tools that are not being used so students don’t run into any dead ends. Make Course Menu names relevant and meaningful to your audience. Keep folder names consistent and relevant.

## LINKS

Syllabus Builder Flash Tutorial

<http://www.blackboard.com/corp/objects/images/quicktutorials/syllabusbuilder.swf>

## TRANSLATING PAPER TO ONLINE

### Syllabus • Course Menu • Folders

The heart and organizing structure of any course, a syllabus can be the first document that is translated into Blackboard. A syllabus can be added to a course in a variety of ways. An existing syllabus can be uploaded to a course directly from the local computer and linked to a content page. Students can click on a link and open the syllabus in the course. To have the flexibility of changing the Syllabus and insuring that students always have the latest version, upload it to the Content System. It can be linked to one or many courses. A new syllabus can be created directly inside a course using the Visual Textbox Editor or the Syllabus tool.

Using the syllabus as a scaffold, build the course structure by creating a conventional system of folders and sub-folders. Folders set up a course hierarchy and can be used to group related material into logical sections based on a theme or a schedule. For example, a theme-based course site may group similar content items together, such as placing all assignments in one folder, lecture notes in another, and external resources in another. The course could also be presented using a schedule-based structure, where folders group content items that are used within the same time frame together, such as all material for “Week One” in one folder and all material for “Week Two” in another. Use a combination of organizational techniques to best represent the structure of your course and the needs of the students.

The Course Menu, located in the left frame is a visual representation of the organization of your course, and will guide students through it, helping them find course materials quickly and easily. If the course structure has a deep hierarchy of nested folders, consider setting the default Course Menu to Detailed View, so students see and can navigate to exactly where they need to go. If your course structure is flatter, set the default Course Menu to Quick View to streamline navigation.

**The Freshman Experience SLS-1501**  
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Attendance and Participation:**  
Your success in this class will depend largely on your willingness and enthusiasm in participating in group activities and class discussions. You are expected to take active part in the classroom experience. Because so much of this class is interactive, attendance is **MANDATORY**. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence during the semester. Each additional absence will lower your grade by 5 points. When absent, you are responsible for anything missed in class. A tardy arrival after the first three weeks of class will lower your grade by 2 points.

**Campus Involvement:**  
Each student is required to participate in **THREE** campus activities. Acceptable activities will be discussed in class. A brief paper, not to exceed one typed double spaced page, must be submitted after each involvement activity. The paper is to contain a short description of the event, your reaction to it, what you learned, (if anything), and if you would recommend it to someone else. Papers turned in late will be subjected to a lower grade. 1 point will be subtracted for every day late, weekends count as two days.

**EXAMS, ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

**Examinations:**  
There will be three short quizzes during the term. These are designed to assess your understanding of the concepts presented in the reading materials and in class discussions/presentations/videos. All quizzes will be unannounced, and given during the first twenty minutes of class.

**Final Portfolio:**  
In place of a final exam, each student will turn in a portfolio of three final draft writing assignments. All portfolios are due the last class meeting. All pieces within the portfolio must be typed. Spelling, punctuation, grammar, content, and style all count!

**Weekly Assignments/Homework:**  
In addition to the brief activity papers, there will be weekly reading and writing assignments from the textbook and online. These will be announced in class. Homework is due at the beginning of class. If you cannot attend class, send your homework in with a classmate or fax it to me. Homework will not be accepted late.

Grading is based on a point system.

Weekly assignments/exercises are worth a total of:	15 points
Each quiz is worth 10 points for a total of:	30 overall quiz points
Campus involvement papers are worth 5 points each for a total of:	15 points
Participation/attendance is worth a total of:	20 points
Final Portfolio is worth a total of:	20 points
There will be opportunities during class time to earn extra credit points	100 points

**Final Grades will be as follows:**

A 93 - 100 points	A- 90 - 92 points	B+ 87 - 89 points
B 83 - 86 points	B- 80 - 82 points	C+ 77 - 79 points
C 73 - 76 points	C- 72 - 70 points	D+ 67 - 69 points
D 63 - 66 points	D- 60 - 62 points	F 0 - 59 points

Quick View	Detailed View	Detailed View Expanded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announcements</li> <li>Your Instructor</li> <li>Class Members</li> <li>Course Contents</li> <li>Stay Organized</li> <li>Let's Talk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email Marketing</li> <li>Announcements</li> <li>Your Instructor</li> <li>Class Members</li> <li>Course Contents</li> <li>Stay Organized</li> <li>Let's Talk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email Marketing</li> <li>Announcements</li> <li>Your Instructor</li> <li>Class Members</li> <li>Course Contents</li> <li>Syllabus               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unit One Overview</li> <li>History of Email</li> <li>Traps and Pitfalls</li> <li>Best Practices</li> <li>Ethics and Laws</li> <li>Unit One Test</li> </ul> </li> <li>Unit Two Campaigning</li> <li>Unit Three Recipients</li> <li>Unit Four Messaging</li> <li>Unit Five Metrics</li> <li>Unit Six Summary</li> <li>Surveys</li> <li>Stay Organized</li> <li>Address Book</li> <li>Calendar</li> <li>Homepage</li> <li>Personal Information</li> <li>Tasks</li> <li>Let's Talk</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tools</li> <li>Communication</li> <li>Course Tools</li> <li>Course Map</li> <li>Control Panel</li> <li>Quick Unenroll</li> <li>Refresh</li> <li>Detail View</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tools</li> <li>Communication</li> <li>Course Tools</li> <li>Course Map</li> <li>Control Panel</li> <li>Quick Unenroll</li> <li>Refresh</li> <li>Quick View</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tools</li> <li>Communication</li> <li>Course Tools</li> <li>Course Map</li> <li>Control Panel</li> <li>Quick Unenroll</li> <li>Refresh</li> <li>Quick View</li> </ul>



## ISSUES AND ANSWERS

**Issue:** How can color be used affectively in an online course?

**Answer:** Color can be used to create associations among content items. For example, one color can be selected for the heading of every content page in one unit and a different color selected for another unit, while a third color can be used for the headings of all assignments. Do be aware that 15 percent of people have some form of color-blindness and have trouble detecting the difference between red/green, green/black or blue/brown. Consider using a combination of color-coding and text descriptions for association.

**Issue:** Students report that they are not seeing the newest material posted in the course.

**Answer:** Remind students to click the "Refresh" link at the bottom of the menu so that the latest updates are displayed.

## LINKS

### Advanced Course Menu Flash Tutorial

<http://www.blackboard.com/products/quicktutorials/CourseMenu.swf>

### Tool Linking Flash Tutorial

<http://www.blackboard.com/products/quicktutorials/ToolLinking.swf>

### Teaching and Learning Tools Flash Tutorial

<http://www.blackboard.com/corp/objects/images/quicktutorials/teachlearntools.swf>

## DESIGNING FOR STUDENTS

### Course Design

As the course is built, design issues need to be considered so that the course is attractive to students and so that they always know where they are and can navigate easily. The Course Menu can be set to default to Quick View or Detailed View. The Quick View can be displayed as buttons or as text. The color of the background and the text for each menu style can also be selected. Keep in mind users with accessibility needs when designing the appearance of the course. For example, buttons are easier than small text to click on for people with mobility issues. Be sure to choose a color scheme for the Course Menu that has adequate contrast so the text is readable.

Another way to create an attractive personalized course setting and provide information to students is to upload a customized Course Banner to your course. A unique Course Banner used on the course entry page will instantly tell students which course they are in (they might have several Blackboard courses). Include the course name, the course section, and instructor's name on the banner. Match the color scheme of the Course Menu to that of the Course Banner to create an inviting course environment.

## ENABLING AND MANAGING TOOLS

### Course Menu • Manage Tool Panel • Tool Area

Blackboard has a wealth of tools available for instructors and students that can be used for a variety of purposes in support of teaching and learning online. Tools can be made available to different types of users such as students, guests and observers. Individual tools can be turned on or off in Manage Tools on the Control Panel.

Tools that are made available in a course can be added to the Course Menu as individual items or as a group in a Tool Panel. There are three tools that can be added to the Course Menu: Course Map, Communication Tools and Course Tools. To add one or more, go to Control Panel > Course Design > Manage Tool Panel. The Tool Panel and the tools listed in it can be renamed so that they make sense to the users when viewed on the Course Menu or on the Course Map. Only the tools that have been turned on will appear to students when they view the Tools page or the Communication page.

To streamline the Course Menu and integrate Blackboard tools in the course content itself, remove tools from the Course Menu. Tools do not have to appear on the Course Menu to be available in the course, as long as they are turned on in Manage Tools. Embed the tools that have been turned on for the course within the content by creating a tool link. Add a link to a tool by selecting an appropriate place in the course content, such as the beginning or the end of a unit from the Course Menu. In Edit View, select Tool from the dropdown menu and click Go. From the list of tools, select a course tool or tool area (such as Communication Tools) or Observer Tools to add any tools that have been made available for Observers (anyone who is not a course member).

Tool linking creates a seamless experience for students because content and tools that are related to each other can be found in the same folder or Content Area. Adding a particular tool to a specific content page directly targets student action throughout the course. Participation and interaction can be integrated with other course materials providing a purposeful and stimulating learning environment.

For example, placing the Discussion Board tool on a page within a Learning Unit at a point where students have been asked to interact after reading and visiting links on previous pages will provide an opportunity to record their thoughts and ideas within the context of their exploration of the material.