

Getting Started Using Blackboard: Quick Tips

Blackboard can be found at <http://blackboard.bowdoin.edu/>.

Online video tutorials for common Blackboard tasks can be found at <http://www.bowdoin.edu/it/blackboard/>.

You will see four tabs along the top of the page: **My Blackboard**, **Courses**, **Campus Organizations**, and **File Services**. The **Courses** tab is the place that you will spend most of your time.

My Blackboard:

Each time you enter Blackboard you will find yourself on this page. You can customize the "look and feel" of this page as well as its contents. To customize the design, click on the **Modify Layout** button in the upper right-hand corner. To customize the content, click on **Modify Content** button in the upper right-hand corner.

The two content items that you cannot modify or remove are **My Announcements** and **Semester Courses**. **My Announcements** allows us to share information system-wide. **Semester Courses** lists the courses you are teaching as well as the courses that your students are enrolled in.

Under **Semester Courses**, you will find the list of courses that you are teaching in Fall 2009 as well as the list of courses that you taught in previous semesters. Click on each link to go to your courses.

Courses:

This tab will list all of the courses that you are teaching. If you attended a training session, you will also see the test course that we enrolled you in for that purpose.

To access your course(s), click on the linked title to access it.

Control Panel:

As faculty, you will add and modify content for your course within the **Course Panel**, which is beneath your course menu on the left column. Your students will not have a Control Panel and therefore, cannot modify or remove your course content.

Menu:

There are five menu items (Course Information, Syllabus, Library Reserves, Library / Research, and Photo Roster) for you to begin with. You may change the names of the existing items, add items, or delete items.

[Please do not modify or remove the Library Reserves menu item.]

In the **Control Panel**, under **Course Options** choose **Manage Course Menu** to modify, remove, or add menu items.

In the **Control Panel**, under **Course Options** choose **Manage Course Design** to change the color of the menu's background and the font color.

In the **Control Panel**, under **Course Options** choose **Settings** to set the **Course Entry** point for your course. The default is Course Info, but you may prefer for your students to enter the course at your Syllabus or Web Resources.

Adding or Modifying Content:

[You will always go through the Control Panel to add or modify content.]

Go to the **Control Panel** to add or modify content to any of the menu items or course tools. For example,

Adding Text:

To add text to your **Course Info** section, click on the **Course Info** option under **Content Areas** in the **Control Panel**. Select **Add Item** from your options. Then enter a title for the content and then enter your text directly into the box provided. Scroll down and click Submit.

Adding a File:

To add a file (Microsoft Word, Excel, Powerpoint, PDF, image, SPSS, etc.) to your **Syllabus** section, click on the **Syllabus** option under **Content Areas** in the **Control Panel**. Select **Add Item** from your options. Enter a title for the content and then scroll down to upload a file from your desktop, a CD, or the network. Scroll down and click Submit.

Adding an External Link to the Internet:

To add an external link to your **Web Resources** section, click on the **Web Resources** option under **Content Areas** in the **Control Panel**. Select **Add External Link** from your options. Enter a title for the link and then the full url (e.g., <http://www.redsox.com/>). Scroll down and click Submit.

Communication and Course Tools:

There are some useful items under **Communication** and **Course Tools** beneath the course's menu. In order to access these tools, you will need to use the **Control Panel**.

Communication:

Announcements – The announcements feature allows you to notify students of upcoming lectures, exams, etc. Your course announcements will appear under **My Announcements** on the front page of Blackboard after your students login.
Discussion board (detailed information below) – The discussion board is a great way to encourage discussion among your students outside of class. For

example, you could assign weekly readings and your students could post their thoughts about them. You could create a forum (e.g., Week One Readings), then a new thread (e.g., Article about Current Events), and your students could post their thoughts and then reply to each other.

Roster – The roster lists the names of the students enrolled in your class.

Eventually we would like to include their email addresses as well as their photos.

Send email – Sending email through Blackboard is an easy way to communicate with your entire class or individual students. Please note that the email comes from your Bowdoin account, but does not create a copy in your Sent folder.

Course Tools:

Digital dropbox (detailed information below) – The dropbox feature allows students to submit homework assignments, essays, and problem sets to you electronically.

Homepage – Your students also have this feature. If they create a homepage with information about themselves, you will be able to access that from this tool.

Library Reserves – This item is also available on your menu. It is a direct link to the list of text and electronic reserves through the Library.

User Manual – If you encounter problems with Blackboard, please access this manual to troubleshoot the problem.

Campus Organizations:

Organizations are similar to courses. The Hatch Science Library and the Baldwin Program for Academic Development are examples of organizations using Blackboard to share content with their students and colleagues.

File Services:

Each course has a space on the Blackboard server to upload and share files. This space is more collaborative in nature than the Courses tab and allows you to upload multiple files and folders. If you click on the Web Folder, a folder will be created on the network that you can access from the "My Network Places" on your PC or from "Connect to Server" on your Mac. You can drag and drop folders into this folder that will then be accessible from the File Services tab in Blackboard. You have control of the permissions for these folders and can give your students read and write access as necessary.

Additional Information:

Discussion Board:

Creating a Forum:

Under the **Control Panel**, choose **Discussion Board**.
Click the **Add Forum** button.
Enter a title for the forum in the **Title** box.
Enter text for the forum in the **Description** box.
Select from the options under **Forum Settings**. Click **Submit**.

Creating a Discussion Thread:

Under the **Control Panel**, choose **Discussion Board**.
Click on the name of a forum.
Click the **Add New Thread** button.
Enter a subject in the **Subject** box.
Type text in the **Message** box. Click **Submit**.

Reading and Replying to a Thread:

In the forum, click the thread name and then click **Reply**. Click **Submit**.

Adding the Discussion Board to your Course Menu:

Under the **Control Panel**, choose **Manage Course Menu** from the **Course Options** box.
Choose **Add Tool Link** from the top menu.
Select **Discussion Board** from the drop-down menu. Then click on the **Submit** button.

Detailed Information about the Digital Dropbox:

Under the **Control Panel**, choose **Digital Dropbox**. The server date stamps the file so you know exactly when the file was submitted to you. There are two options in the dropbox: **Add File** and **Send File**. The **Add File** option simply adds your file to a queue so that you can send it later. This can be rather confusing to you and your students. We **highly** recommend that you and your students use **Send File**, which queues the file and sends it immediately.

Guest Access:

In Blackboard, the default for your course is to be closed to the public, i.e., there is no "guest access." The public includes anyone who is NOT enrolled in your class. If you want to open your course or part of your course to others, there are three places where you will need to configure settings.

First:

1. Go to your course.
2. Click on the Control Panel.

3. Under Course Options, click on Settings.
4. Click on Guest Access.
5. Next to "Allow Guests," click on Yes.

Second:

1. Go to your course.
2. Click on the Control Panel.
3. Under Course Options, click on Manage Tools.
4. Click on Tool Availability.
5. Click on all the check boxes under "Allow Guests."

Third:

1. Go to your course.
2. Click on the Course Panel.
3. Under Course Options, click on Manage Course Menu.
4. For each of the various menu choices (Course Info, Syllabus, Web Resources, Library/Research, Prof Info), click on the Modify button (you can only do one menu item at a time).
5. Check "Allow Guest Access."

(Note: Do not allow guest access for Library Reserves.)

For each menu item, all information can be available to guests or none at all.

If you have an item that you want to make public, but that you would normally fit into an area that is closed to guest access, you can either put that item into another section that is public, or create a new section, and make it public.

Copying course content from one course to another:

Log into Blackboard and go to the course that you want to copy content **FROM**. (This will be a course that you taught in Fall 2008 or Spring 2009.)

Click on the **Control Panel**.

Under the **Course Options** section, choose **Course Copy**.

At the next window, select **Copy Course Materials** into an **Existing Course**.

On the next page under **Select a Course**, browse for the course you want to copy **TO**. (This will be a course you are teaching in Fall 2009.)

Under **Select Course Materials**, choose the content that you want to copy from the original course.

Do **NOT** copy the Enrollments.

Click **Submit**.

You will receive an email when the copy process is complete. Then you can go into your Fall 2009 course and begin modifying and updating the course content.

Making your Fall 2009 courses available in Blackboard

Courses in Blackboard are unavailable until faculty are ready to open them to their students. This will eliminate the display of courses that are not using Blackboard. Below are the steps for making your courses available.

Log into Blackboard and click on the Courses tab. All of your courses (both for this semester and last semester) will be listed in alphabetical order. You will note that this semester's courses have "(Unavailable)" after Spring 2009.

Click on each of your courses individually.

Click on the **Control Panel**.

Choose **Settings** from the **Courses Options** section.

Choose **Course Availability** and click on the **Yes** option to make your course available.

Click **Submit**.

****If you do not want last semester's courses to be available to those students enrolled in those courses, follow the above instructions for your previous courses and change the course availability option to no.****

Note: Courses will become unavailable at the end of the semester

In order to comply with copyright standards, all Blackboard courses will be unavailable to students enrolled in them at the end of each semester. The Spring 2009 courses in Blackboard will remain open and available to students until **January 22, 2010** when the system will close them.