

12+ Simple things to do with a Blackboard course website

Get started: **Get an FSU computer account.** Write down your login name and password. **Request your course website. Log in.**

1. **Make Your Site Available or Unavailable** — Do you want others to see your site right now? If not, choose “no,” but remember to return and choose “yes” when your site is done. You can load documents and not have them available for viewing until you are ready, even if your site is available. Once you are in your course, access through: *Control Panel > Course Options > Settings > Course Availability*. You may also choose to have your course categorized in the course catalog: *Control Panel > Course Options > Settings > Categorize Course*.
2. **Choose Course Options** — Rename, reorder, and add menu items. Turn off menu items and options that you are not using to eliminate dead-ends for the user. Access through: *Control Panel > Course Options > Manage Course Menu*, or through: *Control Panel > Course Options > Manage Tools > Tool Availability*.
3. **Design a Unique Look** — Change the style and color of the navigation menu. The design isn't merely for aesthetic reasons. If you have more than one course, appearance can provide visual cues as to which course you are working in. Access through: *Control Panel > Course Options > Settings > Course Design*. You can also add a banner at: *Control Panel > Course Options > Course Design > Course Banner*. This is more advanced and time consuming, but satisfying.
4. **E-mail Students** — FSU's Registrar automatically populates your course with your students' names. You can e-mail your entire class or select individuals. You can do this even if you do not make your course available. Access through: *Control Panel > Course Tools > Send E-mail*.
5. **Post Announcements** — Announcements appear on the first page of your course website. They also appear on students' My FSU page. You can choose to make an announcement permanent or to appear for a set time and then archived. Using Announcements and E-mail will mean that you no longer have to spend valuable class time with “housekeeping.” Students can click a tab to see all announcements posted for the course. Access through: *Control Panel > Course Tools > Announcements*.
6. **Post Assignments** — This tool enables: 1) you to post your assignments, and 2) students to submit their completed assignment online. It also keeps your e-mail inbox free. (See “Posting Files” below for directions.) You may want to specify which format students are to save their work in and how to label the entries. All entries are date stamped (for any dispute about late work). Access through: *Control Panel >* and choose any *Content Area Assignment > select Assignment* (from the drop down menu at top right) *> click Go*. Students access this from a link on a course content page. Once the assignment has been submitted by students, a Grade Center entry is automatically created with a “!” symbol next to the student's name.
7. **Post Grades** — You can add entries for each assessment and choose if you want the entry to be seen by the student. Students can view only their grades and the class average for that assessment item. They can access their grades through Student Tools on the course site. To add an extra column in Grade Center, access through: *Control Panel > Assessment > Grade Center >*

Add Item. Note: Use this tool only for reporting numerical grades; there can be grade calculation errors. To view students' works and/or assign a grade, access through: *Control Panel > Assessment > Grade Center* > click on the "!" under appropriate column of an Assignment/Exam name and row of a student's name > click *View* to view the student's work and/or assign a grade by replacing the "!" mark under Grade column. You may also make an Assignment/Exam item not viewable to all students, access through: *Control Panel > Assessment > Grade Center* > click on the appropriate Assignment/Exam name link > *Item Information* > select *No* next to "Make item available to users" under step 2 "Options".

8. **Track Student's Use** — This function can be useful if you want to know if a student has been increasing his/her time on task by visiting the course website, or if certain areas of your website were worth the time you spent building them. Access through: *Control Panel > Assessment > Course Statistics*.
9. **Post Discussion Board Topic** — You can post a topic question in a forum and the students can respond. Be sure to specify procedures if you want to encourage them to respond to each other, rather than build a new thread for each student's entry. Once you have entered the forum, you have viewing options. Click the small red triangle at the top of the listing to expand your options. If you "Select all" and "Collect all," you will see all entries in one document, which you can select, copy, and paste to a Word file to use in other formats. Be sure you have students' permission for any distribution. You may sort the entries by date or author (this option is at the bottom of the Bb page). A useful forum to set up is the Online Office, which enables students to post course questions to you. Access through: *Control Panel > Course Tools > Discussion Board > Add Forum*. You may link to the Discussion Board forums you set up through your content areas: Select any *Content Area > Course Link* > scroll down to step 2 "Course Link" and click *Browse* button to find your Discussion Boards. **Note:** This will open a separate window: Click to open the *Communication folder > Discussion Board* > select appropriate *Forum* will insert it into the text box to the right of the *Browse* button.
10. **Specify Groups** — This tool enables groups within the class to have their own discussion board, file exchange, e-mail function, and chat room. Only the group members that you specify can access the material. You'll have to take some time to set up the groups. Access through: *Control Panel > Course Tools > Easy Group Management > Add Group*. To assign users to the created group, Access through *Control Panel > Course Tools > Easy Group Management* > Place a check mark next to appropriate group name. Under "Select" column > click "View/Assign Users" button > click "Modify" button > Place a check mark to appropriate group columns for the students' rows.
11. **Add Content** (See "Posting Files" below for directions.)
 - a. Your syllabi
 - b. Course materials: Decide how to organize your course material — by weeks, topics, units, or texts. Develop a computer filing system for your course that you can mirror on your course website. For maximum instructional design benefit, match your organizational system with learning outcomes and assessments.
12. **Provide Grading References** — Post your grading criteria; provide sample papers or other student work. (See "Posting Files" below for directions.)
13. **Add Resources** — Add links to information on the Web. In the face-to-face **Technology Enhanced Classroom**, you can open Bb and view the linked website in class. Students can later revisit it. This is an excellent way to point students to library databases. Access through: *Control Panel > choose any Content Area > Add URL*.

14. **EASIEST -- Post files as a link:** Save your file in Rich Text Format (ideal), Adobe PDF, or native format (such as Word or WordPerfect). Keep in mind that students may need to be told what viewer software is necessary to read the file. Through *Control Panel > any Content Area > Add Item*.
- a. *Content Information.* Specify a name by typing in a description in the text box next to "Name"
 - b. *Content Attachments.* Browse to select the file to be attached from your computer. Specify a name of the link to the file. From the *Special Action* drop down menu, choose *Create a link to this file*.
 - c. *Options.* Select any restrictions to when you want the file to be visible to students.
 - d. Submit.
15. **OR -- Post files to show directly on a Bb page For brief, unformatted notes:** Through *Control Panel > any Content Area > Add Item*:
- a. *Content Information.* Specify a name.
 - b. *Text.* Place your cursor in the text box below "Text" and start typing (or compose the note in your word processor and paste it here).
 - c. *Options.* Select any restrictions to when you want the file to be visible to students.
 - d. Submit.
 - e. **For longer, formatted documents:** You can paste HTML code into the text box, which allows more robust formatting (but can never perfectly duplicate print formatting). Create the HTML code using a good quality web-editing program such as Dreamweaver. Avoid MS Word's "Save as Web Page" feature, which has serious drawbacks.