



Steps for preparing course materials for blackboard courses.

Prepare Your Materials

Gather all of your course materials and content in a central location. Include items such as handouts, slides shows, syllabus, overheads, lecture notes, projects, assessments, and discussion topics.

If your materials don't currently exist in electronic format convert them in one of the faculty labs located in the loop just inside the Library or in Lincoln Park SAC 285 or click here for the link (<http://www.itd.depaul.edu/website/faculty/ITDServices/FacultyLabs.asp>).

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 when building the course skeleton.

Determine How and When to Deliver Materials

Determine which materials should be delivered in the face-to-face component of your course and which items can be delivered online. Select items that are relevant to course objectives and student learning experiences.

Think about when you want these materials to be made available to your students. For example, do you want your lecture notes available before or after your lecture – there are pros and cons to both placements.

Avoid delivering materials that will distract the student from the course objectives. Do not add irrelevant information to “fill-up” your website.

Build a Course Skeleton

Create the organizational (or skeletal) structure of your course. This involves creating a series of clearly labeled folders that will hold your course material. Make a folder for every item in your outline or mimic the structure of your syllabus.

Alternately you can use index cards to create the structure. Start by creating index cards that corresponds to each of the broad areas from your outline. Add additional cards that represent each of the items you want to include in each category. Using index cards allows you to easily rearrange your course structure.

Building Course Structure in Blackboard

Using the Control Panel and the Course Settings choose the areas that will be available in your course and what you will call them. Decide whether each of these areas will be available to guest users.

All areas that you will be using for the course should be enabled and viewable by students the first day of class. Avoid adding, deleting, or changing the names of class areas during the class. Doing so may cause confusion in some students.

Add Staff Information

Using the Control Panel choose the staff information content area and create an entry for yourself. You may add a picture of yourself and links to your homepage from here. You may also want to include information about your office hours and how students can reach you.

Fill in the Content.

Once the structure is completed in Blackboard you can begin adding content. Create folders and sub-folders as necessary based on the course skeleton that you created. Try to keep your folder depth to a maximum of 3-4 so students can find material easily.

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 this item in relation to the rest of the course materials.

Format the Discussion Board

Enter the Discussion Board, create a Forum, and post an introductory assignment. For example, you may ask each student to write a paragraph explaining who they are and why they took your course.

Think of other ways to encourage your students to respond to each other in an “icebreaker” exercise. This is the first step to creating an “online community” for your course. If you want your students to use the discussion board it is usually a good idea to provide them with clear guidelines and expectations. Provide students with a rubric that clearly identifies what is expected and grade their responses as you would class participation.

Link to External Resources

Locate at least three external websites that relate to information you are teaching. Your ITD Library Liaison (<http://library.depaul.edu/About/liaison.aspx>) can help you identify appropriate websites and databases.

You may recommend that students visit these sites on “virtual fieldtrips” and report to the class using the discussion board. Alternately you can structure an assignment that incorporates research using the external resource provided.

Also consider placing links to the download pages of any plug-ins, player, readers, or viewers that are necessary to access the various kinds of files or multimedia you are using in your course. The most common will be the reader for Acrobat, Adobe Flash Player and the player for PowerPoint.

Create an Introductory Assignment.

Post an introductory message in the announcements area. Welcome the students to your course and direct them to information about your course (Syllabus, Course Information, etc...). Indicate the location of the first class assignment and/or reading.

Complete the Process.

Preview course materials by checking each link, proofreading descriptions, and viewing the course from a student perspective.

Make your course available by changing the Course Availability under Course Settings in the Control Panel.

Provide your students with a handout on using blackboard that can be distributed at your first face-to-face meeting.