Organizing Your Course

Think for a moment about some websites you use frequently. Most are easy to navigate, because the pages and content are organized with pages and headings. Your Blackboard course shouldn’t be any different. If you want students to find the files, links, and activities in your course, it should be organized, too.

Let’s look at one example of content posted in a course.

Notice that there are many items and files, but they don’t appear in any particular order.

Nor is there any way to know when to use each item, or how the files are to be used.

This situation can be confusing and overwhelming to students.

Instead, you can present the same content in a structured and organized fashion by using folders, being consistent about naming files, and putting files in a logical order.

Folders can contain content, like files or links, activities, like links to discussion boards or blogs, and assessments, including assignments and tests.

Create your structure based on your syllabus and teaching style.

For example, the content can be broken up by Week, Unit, Module, or even Chapter.

This makes it easier for students to find the correct materials when they are needed.

In this example, content is organized in folders by Unit.

Each unit is listed in order and contains a brief description, so that students can see what to expect at a glance.

Inside the Unit 1 folder, everything is organized into a logical sequence, which is identical in all of the other units.

Let’s create a new unit folder for unit 4 and add content to it, following this same sequence.

First, on the Action Bar, hover over ‘Build Content’ tab and select and click on ‘Content Folder’ under the ‘New Page’ heading.
Provide a name for the folder.

In this case it will be ‘Unit 4: Designing Successful Group Activities’.

You can add a description for what is in this folder, as well, to help students find the right unit.

In this case we will include include: Topic Overview, Emerging Technologies, Group Assignment Feature, and Group Enrollment Options.

Next, determine whether to not to make the the folder available.

Once again, this decision is based on your teaching style.

Do you prefer to make all of your content available to your students at the same time?

Do you prefer to make the content available during the week in which the material is assigned?

It’s important to note that the setting can be changed at any time, so if you wish to keep the folder unavailable initially while adding content, it can later be made available to students.

You can also track the number of views for this folder, and limit when the students are able to view the folder by setting date and time restrictions.

Remember that, if you use date and time restrictions, you must set the Availability to Yes, or the dates will not work.

Setting a date restriction at the folder level prevents students from accessing all of the content, too, which means you don’t have to set additional date restrictions on the content you put in the folder, which saves you time.

In this case, we will make Unit 4 available immediately.

Now click on the Submit button to create the folder. The Unit 4 link now appears as the last item on the ‘Content’ page.

Open the Unit 4 folder by clicking on the link.

Notice that the title at the top of the page has changed to the folder name.
We can now add content to the folder using the same structure that was used in Units 1 through 3.

Let’s add the first item. In the Action Bar, hover over ‘Build Content’ tab and select ‘Item’.

In this case, the item will be a text description of the Unit 4 topic, ‘Designing Successful Group Activities’.

First, provide the name of the item, Topic Overview - Unit 4.’

Now, click in the Text Box Editor, and type in the content of the Topic Overview.

When you are done adding text, determine if you want to attach a file in the second option, Attachments, and whether you wish to permit users to view this content immediately, or delay release until a later date in the third option, Standard Options.

Finally, click the ‘Submit’ button.

You can now view the first item for this Unit, the Topic Overview for Unit 4.

When ready, add others items following the pattern of the previous units.

The quickest way to create a consistent structure for your course is to build a single folder that has the various items needed and then copy the folder for the later weeks.

Then you can edit the contents of each folder while maintaining a consistent structure and organization.

Don’t forget that you can also add additional items to the course menu to help you provide a clear structure for your course.

You can learn more about these in the lesson on the Course Menu.

You can and should consider how you structure your course by customizing the menu and using folders.
Best practices is to structure your course so that its organization, logic, and flow is clear to your students.

Your students will appreciate the order and consistency because it will be easier for them to navigate and use the files, links, assessments, and tools that you create for them.

This tutorial discussed the pedagogical value of organizing your online courses, as well as providing examples of organizational structure.