



Blackboard

Content Building

Organizing Your Course Content

Issues and Answers

Issue: Linking an evaluation item (assignment, test, blog, etc.).

Answer: If the item is inside a Content Area or a Folder it will link directly to the item. Linking in a Learning Module will go to the first item in that module not necessarily the exact item intended.

Issue: I need documents available to me that students don't see?

Answer: You can create a Content Area that is invisible to students by leaving the Available to Users checkbox empty. You can place virtually anything in there and organize to suit your needs.

"First comes thought; then organization of that thought; into ideas and plans; then transformation of those plans into reality"

~Napoleon Hill (1883-1970)

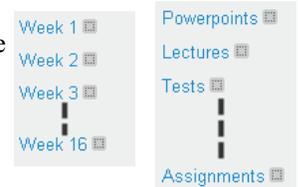
Organization is critical to the success of your course. You will need to place yourself in the shoes of your students to understand what will make it easiest for them to progress through your course and you will want to provide the flexibility that you desire. Here are some 'big picture' views of organizational options available to you:

Complete the Home Page:

The Home Page (Entry Point) for a course is crucial. This is the content the student will see first when they enter your course. Placing key items here like the syllabus, Read Me First documentation, and other course overview items that make the overall course easier to understand is important.

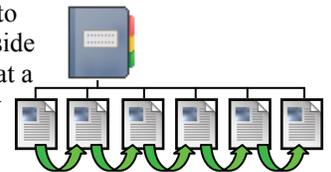
Use multiple Content Areas for item types or units:

You can create multiple Content Areas off the menu to provide access to each type for content (Powerpoints in one, tests in another, etc.) or by having a Content Area for each unit of the course (week, chapter, etc.). This can be an easy upfront approach but overall will not provide the greatest flexibility and may result in a long, unfriendly navigation menu.



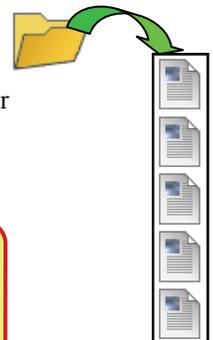
Use Learning Modules inside a Content Area:

Learning Modules are a special type of folder. It allows you to place any number of items inside (folders are not allowed inside a Learning Module) that are viewed by the student one item at a time (ie, think Web site with one item per Web page) so they step through the content.



Use Folders inside a Content Area:

Folders allow you to group similar items together (example: folder of Web resource links) or to group items relating to a specific unit (chapter, week, etc.). A folder will list the content items out one after the other vertically (ie. Think Web page with a scroll bar).



"Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up!"

~A. A. Milne (1882-1956)



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Continued...

Tips and Tricks

Tip: Some content items can be moved/copied within the course later but not all, for example tests and assignments. Consider how you want to organize the content of your course to minimize future rework.

Tip: Organizing content placing everything (lesson, Powerpoint, assignment, discussion, test, etc.) in one container (Learning Module or Folder) for each unit can make progressing through the course easier and more natural for the students.

Tip: "For every minute spent in organizing, an hour is earned." ~Unknown author. This is very true with online materials. You may use folders, 3-ring binders, cabinets, and more organizing your 'real' life so consider how you will approach your 'virtual' class.

Organizing by topics:

This is a specific method of organizing content to provide flexibility within your course. There are various formats that courses can be delivered in from as short as 3 weeks to as long as 16 weeks. The objective of this method is to organize all the content according to topics. Each topic area would contain all items (tests, quizzes, assignments, lessons, etc.) relating to that topic. This would be the main Content Area you would place everything in and title it something like 'Content by Topic.' You then create another Content Area that you would create folders for each week in the course. In each of those folders you would place an internal link to each topic folder from your main Content (by Topic) Area. This makes it very easy to convert a course to various formats in the future and you would provide two ways the students can access your materials either by the schedule or by topic.

