KENT STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y
Tuscarawas

Network Services

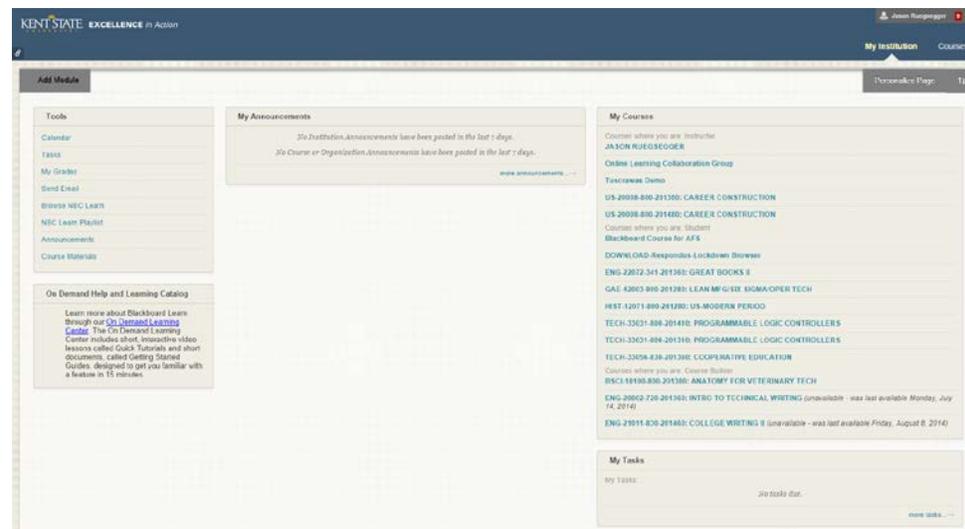# How to Get Started in Blackboard Learn

Logging in - There are two ways to log into Blackboard:
1. Log into Flashline and click the "Blackboard" link.
   OR
2. Go to http://learn.kent.edu and log in with your Flashline username and password.

**Logging out** – Do not forget to log out when you're done!

Navigation:

After logging in, you should see a page similar to the one above. Note that you start on the "My Institution" tab. You *can* access a list of your courses by clicking on "Courses" at the top, but it's usually easier to find your course in the "My Courses" pane, right here on the My Institution page.

If you can't see your course, or if you would like to hide old courses, hover over the My Courses pane, and click on the gear icon that appears at the top:
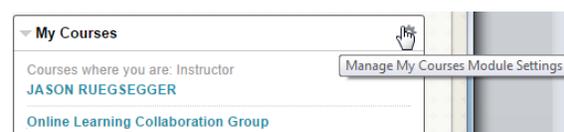
Then, check or uncheck the "Course Name" and "Announcements" boxes for the classes that you wish to show or hide. You can also choose to display additional information for each course. Click "Submit" when finished.

To open your course, click on its name from either the "Courses" page or the "My Courses" pane of the "My Institution" page. You will be taken to the entry point for that course (usually either Course Content, email, or Grades – you can change this later). If you start out in the Grades or Email sections, click on "Course Content" at the left. Your screen should look something like this: (without the red boxes, of course)

Breaking it down:

1. Breadcrumbs area – This area displays the path to your current location, similar to website breadcrumbs. If you're currently looking at a piece of content in a folder that's inside another folder, you can see each of the parent folders' names and navigate to them with a single click.
2. Edit Mode – As a general rule, keep Edit Mode turned on. If you want to see what a student sees, use Student View or your test student. If you enter your course and don't see the normal options to change your content, check to make sure Edit Mode is on.
3. Left-hand Navigation – Use this to navigate between main areas of the course. You can also create links here, if desired, for special content areas or tools. Students can see this section, except any links that you choose to hide.
4. Course Management Tools – This "accordion" style menu contains various tools for the instructor's use, and cannot be seen by students.

5. Current Location – displays the title of the content area or folder that is currently open.
6. Content Creation Tools – options in this area are used to create the actual items, assignments, links, and other pieces of content that you'd like for your students to see.
7. Content Area – Once created, course materials and content will appear in this section.

To open a folder, file, link, or almost any other element, click on its name in the content area, left-hand navigation, or breadcrumbs. The Current Location area shown above will always show your present place in the course. Anything that you build using the Content Creation Tools will appear in your current location. If you accidentally create something in the wrong place, don't panic or delete it; you can move it to another location (we'll cover that below.)

Creating Folders:
This is first for a reason. Organization is the most important component of a web course. When a student logs in, the course should be both easy to navigate and easy to look at, which are not necessarily the same thing.

For example, an over-organized course with one or two folders in the Course Content section and folders inside folders inside folders looks fairly appealing and simple upon entering the course. Delving into the folder structure, it becomes difficult to keep track of where things are and to find the way back to where you were. In contrast, a course with no folders and everything "dumped" in the Course Content area is theoretically easy to navigate because everything is in the same place. However, lack of structure means that students must make their way down through a long and ugly list of items to find the one they want.

Finding the proper balance between these is important. We recommend something like this:

1. Course Content
   a. Getting Started
   b. Weekly Lessons
        i. Week 1 (dates)
       ii. Week 2 (dates)
      iii. Week 3 (dates) etc…
   c. Other Resources, etc.

To create a folder, hover over "Build Content" then choose "Content Folder". You'll see this screen:

Fill in a name for the folder. You can add a text description, if desired, in the "Text" box. The Standard Options area is used throughout content creation in Blackboard, so familiarize yourself with it here.

Permit Users to View this Content: Unless this piece of content is just a note for yourself, "Yes" should always be selected here. Choosing "No" will mean that students cannot see the item - even after the "Display After" date.

Track Number of Views: This optional parameter enables statistics tracking for the item, you may choose to use this or not.

Select Date and Time Restrictions: Display After and Until are fairly self-explanatory. The box next to each must be checked to activate it, then click the calendar and clock buttons in each row to set dates and times that the item will appear and disappear. If neither option is selected, the content will be available immediately and indefinitely after clicking "Submit".

Once you have a couple of folders or other elements created, you can reorder them in the list by simply hovering over the item, getting ahold of the left edge where the arrows appear, and dragging up or down.
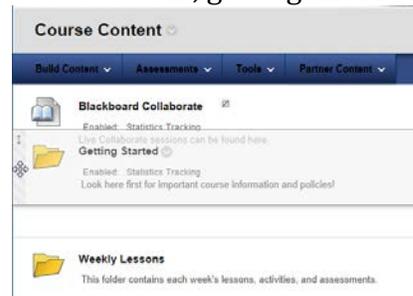
Moving, Copying, and Deleting Content:

If you created something in the wrong place and would like to move it, hover over the item and click the icon next to the name, then choose "Move". Choose the course and folder (by clicking "Browse") that you would like to move the item into, then click "Submit".

Copying an item is just like moving – just choose "Copy" from the drop menu instead of "Move".

Same for deleting, except that when you choose "Delete," you'll get an "Are you sure?" message instead of the destination page.

Items Vs Files:

When uploading document files to your course, you have a couple of options. You can add them as "items" or as "files". An Item is a simple element that can contain text, images, and HTML code. Files can be added to items as attachments. The benefit of using this method is that descriptions or instructions can be added to the element. Clicking the name of the element does nothing.

File elements do not have a text field for descriptions. The file is simply uploaded and students click on the name of the element to open it. We'll skip file elements for now, because they are very easy to create once we learn the others.

You can experiment with these and choose whichever of the two methods you prefer, but choose one and be consistent so that your students aren't confused.

Creating Items:
Go to Build Content>Item. Give the item a name. The text field under that can contain a description, instructions, or HTML.

To add an HTML element such as a YouTube video (with the YouTube embed code), first click the ⌄ icon at the far right of the text box to show all options, then click ᴴᵀᴹᴸ to turn on HTML mode. Be sure to turn on HTML mode before you type or copy HTML code into the box.

To attach a file, click "Browse My Computer" in the Attachments section. Find and choose the file that you would like to upload. It should show up under "Attached Files". If you would like, you can change the name of the link. The Standard Options section works just like it did for folders. Click "Submit" when you're finished.

Web Links and Course Links:
If you would like to provide students with a link to an outside online resource, go to Build Content>Web Link. Give the link a name – this is the text that will appear in the content area. Then enter the web address of the page that you want to link to in the URL box. Enter a text description if necessary in section 2. If you want, you can attach a file here also (although I'm not sure why you would). Generally, you'll want to leave "Open in New Window" at "Yes". Opening the link in another window helps to avoid confusion and lost time from accidentally closing the window and needing to log into Learn all over again. Standard Options are, well, standard (See Creating Folders). Don't forget to click Submit.

Course links are used to provide a shortcut to another area or item in the course. For Course Links, go to Build Content>Course Link. Click "Browse" next to "Choose Item". Select the course element to which you will link. You may change the name or add a description if desired. Fill in the standard options and submit.

Discussion Boards:

Discussion Board access is first available to the instructor by expanding "Course Tools" in the Course Management area and clicking "Discussion Board". You should see the default discussion board (named after your course) in the list. Click on its name to open the discussion board.

Each discussion board (you'll use the default one in most cases) is made up of forums. The instructor can create forums with writing prompts for the students to follow. The students will then create threads inside that forum. Structuring it in this way allows students to create their own thread and separately reply to others' writings without it all being jumbled together.

Click "Create Forum" to build your first forum. Fill in the name and availability. Then, you are presented with a multitude of options:

Standard View – Students can see any existing threads in the forum on entry.

Participants must create… - Students can't see any threads until they've posted their own

Grading – The first two options are your choice. "Grade Threads" shouldn't be used in the way that we're setting up the forum and threads.

Subscriptions – Up to you. This doesn't automatically subscribe students to the forum or threads. It simply allows them to opt-in to email notifications when someone else posts.

Allow Anonymous Posts – Self Explanatory. Not recommended if the forum is being graded

Allow Author to Delete Own Posts – Allows a student do delete a post that he or she created.

Allow Author to Edit… - Allows a student to edit a post that he or she created.

Allow Members to Create New Threads – IMPORTANT: if using the scheme discussed here, this option must be checked so that students can post.

Allow File Attachments – Students can add files to their responses.

Allow Users to Reply with Quote – similar to most web forums, this option allows a user to include a quote from another user to their reply for added context.

Force Moderation of Posts: When this option is checked, student posts are not visible in the forum until the instructor approves them.

You will want to create a link to the discussion board somewhere in your course, and you can create links directly to specific forums inside your weekly lesson folders. To do this, navigate to the area where you would like the link to appear. Go to Tools>Discussion Board. Here you can choose whether to link to the root discussion board page or a specific forum. You can also create a new forum here, which can streamline your workflow when creating directly from the content area.

<u>**Creating Assignments:**</u>

Assignments are used in cases where the professor gives the student a set of instructions and expects the students to complete either a text entry or some sort of file (MS Office documents, program code, images, etc.) To create an assignment, choose Assessments>Assignment. Enter a name and instructions for completing the assignment. You can attach a sample, prompt, or other file if needed. Set the number of possible grade points for the assignment. You can also associate a rubric to the assignment – we'll cover rubrics in another training session. Set the number of attempts that you would like to allow; a student can view the assignment as many times as he or she choses, but can only submit their completed assignment as many times as are allowed here. Due Dates don't stop a student from submitting the assignment, they only mark the submission as late if it comes in after the set time. Assignments will go to all students individually unless you're breaking off into groups. Groups will also be covered in a different session.

Students see a page like the one below when opening the assignment. They can easily attach files in section 2.
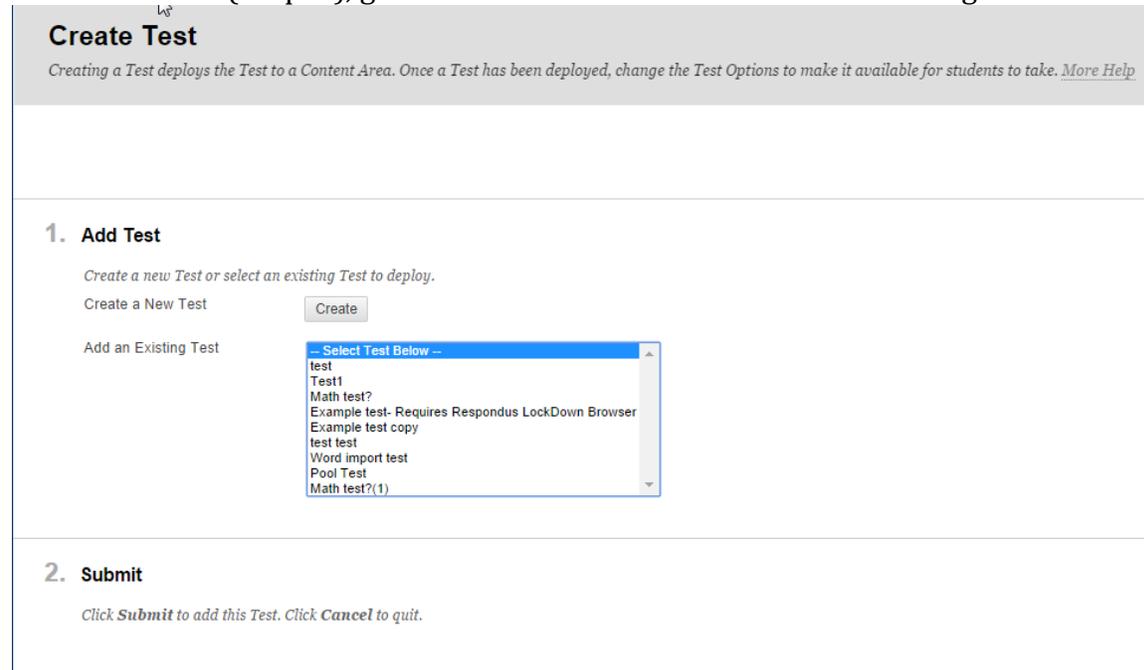
Tests:

To create a test (or quiz), go to Assessments>Test. You'll see something like this:

Here, you have the option to either create a new test or choose an existing one. If we're starting fresh, we'll need to click "Create" to build a new test. Fill in the name, description, and instructions on the next page as desired, then submit. This will bring you to the test canvas. The test canvas is where you'll add questions and point values to the test. We'll start with a **multiple choice question**.
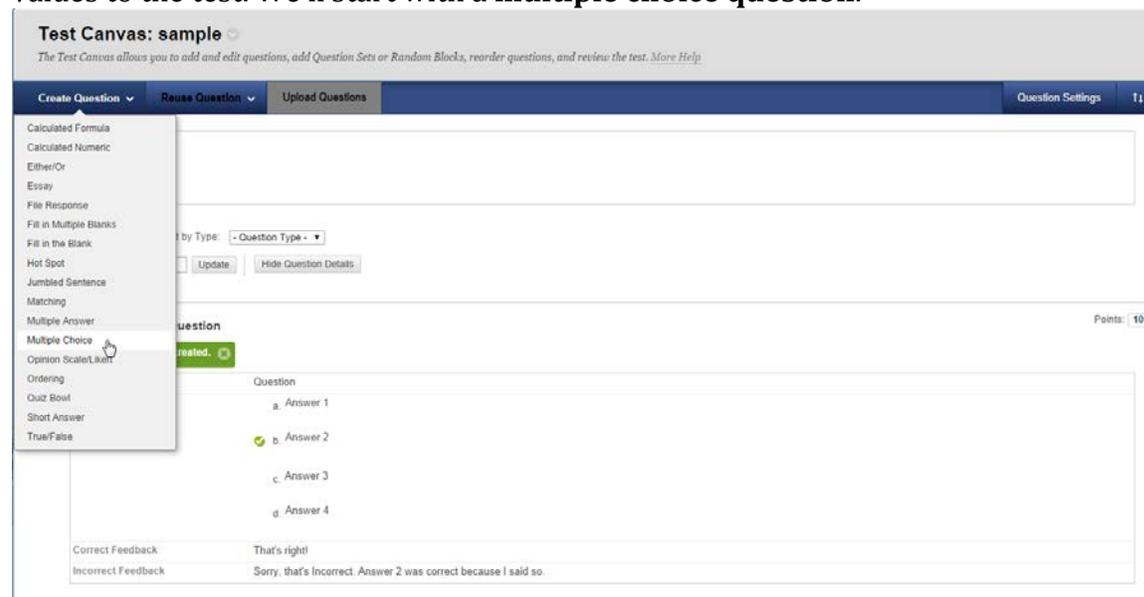
Select Create Question>Multiple Choice. You can leave "Question Title" blank, but must fill in the "Question Text" – this is where you ask the question. Fill in Section 2 as desired. Using "Answer Numbering" means you won't have to include numbers or letters in the answer text. "Allow Partial Credit" will place a box next to the incorrect answers where you can dictate the percentage of partial credit each answer is worth.

In Section 3, choose the number of answers and fill in the text for each answer in its own separate box. IMPORTANT! Mark the correct answer using the radio buttons to the left of the answer boxes. Be sure to do this and verify correct answers on the test canvas before finalizing the test creation. You can fix it later, but it's better to get it right the first time.

If you'd like to add feedback for correct and incorrect answers, you can do that in Section 4. Students won't see this until the test has been submitted, and we'll look at feedback options when we get to the test options below.

You can basically ignore Section 5 for right now, it allows you to add data to the question that you can search or filter by later. Instructor notes are just for you. When you're finished, submit, or click "Submit and Create Another" to save this question and open a new blank question of the same type. Your questions should appear on the test canvas as you go.

True/False Questions work almost exactly like multiple choice questions.

Fill in the blank questions are fairly straightforward, but be sure to include all possible correct answers to the question. Blackboard will compare the student's response with the correct answers that you provide and grade accordingly. You'll want to keep these answers short and simple for obvious reasons.

Essay questions are not automatically graded and must be manually read and graded by the instructor.

When all of the questions are complete, the proper answers are marked correct, and appropriate point values are assigned, click $\boxed{\leftarrow \text{OK}}$ at the bottom of the test canvas window. This will take you back to the Create Test page, and your newly created test should be highlighted for you already. Click Submit.

Test Options:
Name – the name that will appear in the content area
Open Test in New Window – No is usually fine here.
Make the Link Available – Always make this one a yes, unless the test is just for you.
Add a New Announcement for this Test – Optional. This will create a class announcement that the test has been posted.
Multiple Attempts – Just what it sounds like. This is at the instructor's discretion. Leave it unchecked to allow only a single attempt.
Force Completion – Do yourself a favor, and DO NOT use this option. Every time a student has a minor network blip in the midst of a test, it will kick them out and not let them back in. It's not worth it. As an alternative, try using a single attempt and setting the timer with the Auto Submit feature turned on. This will start a timer when the student first enters the test and automatically stop them and submit their test once the timer expires. The timer will not pause if the student leaves the test or loses a network connection, so they must still complete it all at once, but they won't get locked out until the timer expires.
Password – Allows the instructor to set a pre-shared password that is required to take the test.
Test Availability Exceptions – Allows the instructor to allow accommodations such as extra time or multiple attempts to users with disabilities.
Include this Test in Grade Center Score Calc. – This option will most always be checked, unless you're creating a practice quiz or such that won't count for a grade.
Hide Results for this Test Completely... - This option makes the test attempts unavailable to the instructor. Use this only if you're allowing students an ungraded self-test or practice test that they can review.
Show Test Results and Feedback – dictates which types of information students are able to see once they complete the test, and when the information becomes available.

Basic Grading:
To see tests or assignments that have been submitted and require some manual grading, go to Grade Center (In Course Management tools at left), then Needs Grading. To see the entire gradebook, go to Grade Center>Full Grade Center.

Tests and assignments that you have created should create columns here automatically. There is also a Total Column that is automatically generated. You can create new columns for other assignments, or new calculated total or subtotal columns if desired. Clicking on a grade for an assignment or test (anything that's not in a calculated column) displays a text box where you can change that grade. Clicking the ⌄ icon next to a test or assignment name, then choosing "Grade Attempts" allows the instructor to browse through all student attempts and review or grade them manually. We'll cover more advanced grading techniques such as rubrics, grading schemas, and reports in another session.

As always, if you need assistance with these or other Blackboard Topics, contact Network Services!