



The ways that course content is presented to students will reflect the teaching style of the instructor, the organization of the material to be covered in the class and the objectives for mastery of that material. Select a method of organization that best fits the goals of the course, keeping in mind the ways that students will navigate through the course to find content and how they will utilize materials and tools. There are many ways to present content to students in a Blackboard course. Presentation of content can be linear, it can be interconnected like the Web, or reflect a combination of formats. However content is presented, a clear organizational structure with logical naming conventions for folders and items will allow students to quickly find what they need and achieve their goals.

## ISSUES AND ANSWERS

**Issue:** It takes a long time to add folders and items one at a time to a course. Is there a faster way to organize and add content to a course?

**Answer:** Building a course is a lengthy process that unfolds over time. To save time, plan and organize materials offline on your local computer. Design a folder structure that reflects the structure of the course. Reproduce the structure in Blackboard so that when new items are added, they will already have a logical location. Next, create your content items for each folder. Content can be added to the existing course structure over time as it is developed.

**Issue:** Is there a way to build in review material and refer to previous material without having to copy everything into another folder?

**Answer:** Use Course Links to site prerequisite material, such as a formula, equation, vocabulary word, or other rule or fact when new content that builds on the mastery of the former concept is presented.

## MEETING LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### *Learning Units • Adaptive Release of Content*

Learning Units and Adaptive Release both aide in controlling the flow of material to students and provide a customized learning environment based on the organization of the course, the assessment of student skills, participation, and achievement.

Designing lessons and differentiating learning goals help students fulfill specific course objectives. Learning Units present multiple content items in a single package of information. The difference between a Learning Unit and a Folder from the student perspective is that each item in a Learning Unit is displayed on its own page with navigation to the other items, whereas items in a Folder are all displayed vertically on one page. The Learning Unit may be set to enforce a sequential view of the content for guiding learning, or allow users to explore the unit freely using the table of contents that is automatically generated when the learning unit is created.

Students enter courses with different sets of skills, learning styles and experiences that impact their ability to achieve mastery of course objectives. Custom learning paths through course content and activities can be created using Adaptive Release of Content. Content items, discussions, assessments, assignments, or other activities can be released to students based on a set of criteria including: date/time, username, group membership, grade or attempt on a particular Gradebook item, and/or review of another content item.

For example, tests in a classroom situation are typically used as means of controlling the release of content. New material is not presented to the group until students have been assessed on their mastery of the preceding material. Adaptive Release can be used in an online course to require that students meet an assessment goal before they are allowed to move on to the next unit. Another example of Adaptive Release is setting the criteria based on the Review Status tool. Students must mark as reviewed a document listing a set of rules for using the Discussion Board before a link to the Discussion Board is released to them and they are allowed to post.

Taken a step further, combining assessment results dynamically with specialized content released to individual students based on how the criteria was met can create individualized learning experiences. For example, content items for "Unit One" are withheld until students have taken a pre-test to assess their prior knowledge. Based in the results of the test, some students will have remedial material in "Unit One" and some students will not.

## ASSOCIATING MATERIALS WITH EACH OTHER

### *Course Links • Tool Links*

Weave Blackboard content items, tools, and assessments together using internal links to reinforce concepts, stimulate communication and connect assessments with other course tools, material, and achievements. Placing Course Links on content pages can help direct students to other relevant course materials and streamline course navigation.

Inserting Tool Links within content paths encourages participation at relevant points in the course. Used in conjunction with Learning Units and Adaptive Release, strategically placed links to other content items, tools, tests and surveys gives you control over how students experience the course and guides them through material so that they can build knowledge and skills in logical pathways to achieve course objectives and master the material.





## ISSUES AND ANSWERS

**Issue:** Is there a way to build complex adaptive release criteria – meaning that students must fulfill two or more conditions to meet release criteria?

**Answer:** By selecting Adaptive Release: Advanced from the Manage button associated with a particular content item, it is possible to build multiple Adaptive Release Rules. Multiple criteria in a rule are connected by “AND” statements so that all criteria must be met before content is released. Multiple Rules are connected by “OR” statements so that the content is visible if a student meets the criteria of just one Rule.

### LINKS

#### Organizing and Managing Content for Instructors PDF Tip Sheet

[http://www.blackboard.com/docs/r6/6\\_1/content/instructor/bbcs\\_howto\\_organize\\_content\\_instructor.pdf](http://www.blackboard.com/docs/r6/6_1/content/instructor/bbcs_howto_organize_content_instructor.pdf)

#### Adaptive Release Flash Tutorial

<http://www.blackboard.com/corp/objects/images/quicktutorials/adaptiverelease.swf>

#### Learning Unit Flash Tutorial

<http://www.blackboard.com/corp/objects/images/quicktutorials/learningunits.swf>

#### Making Content Available to Students with Disabilities PDF Tip Sheet

[http://behind.blackboard.com/docs/LearningServices/Other/BbAccessibleContent\\_Tipsheet.pdf](http://behind.blackboard.com/docs/LearningServices/Other/BbAccessibleContent_Tipsheet.pdf)

## STRUCTURING THE COURSE

### Folders

Reflect the course structure by dividing course material into units, providing organization and a framework for development. Build the course structure and stay organized by placing content items within a conventional system of folders and sub-folders. Folders can be used to group related material into logical sections. An organized presentation of materials will guide students through the course, and will help them stay focused.

The Course Menu, located in the left frame is a visual representation of the organization of your course, and will help students find materials quickly and easily. If the course structure has a deep hierarchy of nested folders, consider setting the default Course Menu to Detailed View, so students see and can navigate to exactly where they need to go. If your course structure is flatter, set the default Course Menu to Quick View to streamline navigation.

Folders can be created and nested within each other to create the desired presentation. For example, a theme-based course site may group similar content items together, such as placing all assignments in one folder, lecture notes in another, and external resources in another. The course could also be presented using a schedule-based structure, where folders group content items that are used within the same time frame together, such as all material for “Week One” in one folder and all material for “Week Two” in another, or “Chapter One” and “Chapter Two”. Use a combination of organizational techniques to best represent the structure of your course and the needs of the students.

