

Creating and Grading Assignments

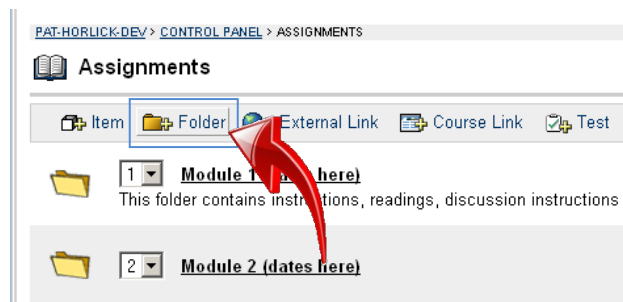
Your course will probably consist of a series of learning modules (arranged by textbook chapters, topics, or weeks). Each module will include appropriate learning activities and assessments to meet the intended learning outcomes. These activities may include: reading assignments, homework assignments, exercises, quizzes/exams, research papers, projects, links to websites, etc.

In a Blackboard course, these activities and assessments are usually provided under the default content area called “**Assignments**” (this may have been renamed, for example, “**Modules**”).

Working with the Assignments Page

Go to the **Control Panel** and select **Assignments**. Here you can choose to add an **Item**, **Folder**, **External Link**, **Course Link**, or **Test**. You can also add various Learning Activities from the drop down list on the right. This is an important list that allows you, for example, to create homework assignments that can be submitted by your students and automatically added to your grade book (see below).

Adding a Folder

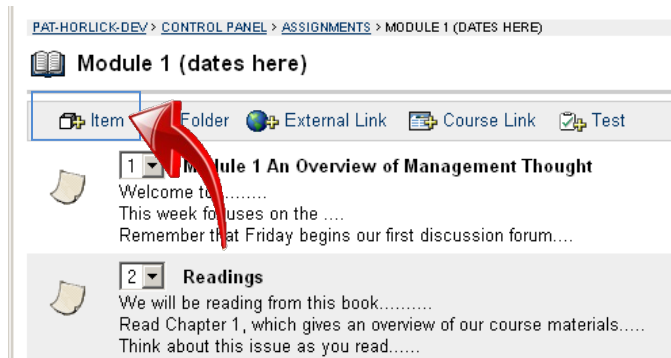


A folder allows you to group your content into chapters, modules, etc. When you choose to add a folder, you are asked to provide a name and description (this is what the student will see on the main Assignments page). You can also set the folder to be “Available” or not, which can be useful if you wish to hide the content until you want the students to see it.

Once you have created a folder (click on the **Folder** link), you can just click the folder name in the Assignments list to enter the folder. Once in the folder, you have all the same options that you have at the Assignments level. In other words, you can add an Item, Folder, External Link, Course link, or Test within the folder by clicking on the link that corresponds to it.

Best practices: It's a great idea to group all activities for a single learning unit into a folder. For example, the Chapter 1 folder might begin with a list of intended learning outcomes, followed by a reading assignment, links to useful learning resources, a homework assignment, and a test. As a general rule, do not create multiple folder levels if you can avoid it, otherwise you will create a navigational nightmare for students. Best practices in Web design use the phrase "two-click" navigation", which means try to avoid any navigation that requires the user to click more than twice from a main page to get what they need. As a rule, create just one layer of folders within Assignments, for example Chapter 1, Chapter 2, etc., and then provide all the material for each of these modules directly within each folder. This is not an absolute rule — sometimes, you will find it more practical to add folder within folders.

Adding a Item



Items are simply listed directly on your **Assignments** page (or on a folder under your Assignments page). You must provide a name (title) for the item, and text, and you can also attach one or more files to each item. Items are useful for many purposes:

- Provide a list of learning outcomes
- Provide a reading assignment, or other assignments that does not require online submission
- Provide an assignment that requires submission but that you do not want to be directly associated with your grade book (for example extra credit work, or a special project of some kind).
- Provide links to useful documents, spreadsheets, media files, etc.

To add an **Item**, go the **Control Panel, Assignments (Content Area)** section. If the item is intended to appear in a folder **under** the Assignments page, go to that folder. Click the **Item** icon. In the **Section 1** area, provide a name and the text that you want to appear on the page for this item. If you want to include links to files, in **Section 2**, browse to the file you want and provide a name for the link. In **Section 3**, indicate whether or not you want the link to be available to student and apply other settings. Press **Submit**. If you have multiple files, on the Assignments page, click the **Modify** button for this Item and repeat the steps to attach a file for every file you want to add.

Adding an External Link



This is useful if you want to provide a reference to a Web site, for example to direct students to a useful learning or research resource. You can provide a name (title), a URL, and a description.

- To add an **External Link**, go the **Control Panel** and choose **Assignments** from the **Content Areas** section. If the item is intended to appear in a folder **under** the Assignments page, go to that folder.
- Click the **External Link** icon. In the **Section 1** area, provide a name and the text that you want to appear on the page for this item. If you want to also include links to some of your own files, in **Section 2**, browse to the file you want and provide a name for the link.
- In **Section 3**, indicate whether or not you want the link to be available to student and apply other settings. Press **Submit**. If you want to add multiple files to this link, on the Assignments page, click the **Modify** button for this Item and repeat the steps to attach a file for every file you want to add.

Adding a Course Link

This is useful if you want to link to an item elsewhere in the course. As a rule avoid this unless the alternative is to duplicate material in two course locations. Otherwise, if you need to link elsewhere, why not just provide the material right here?

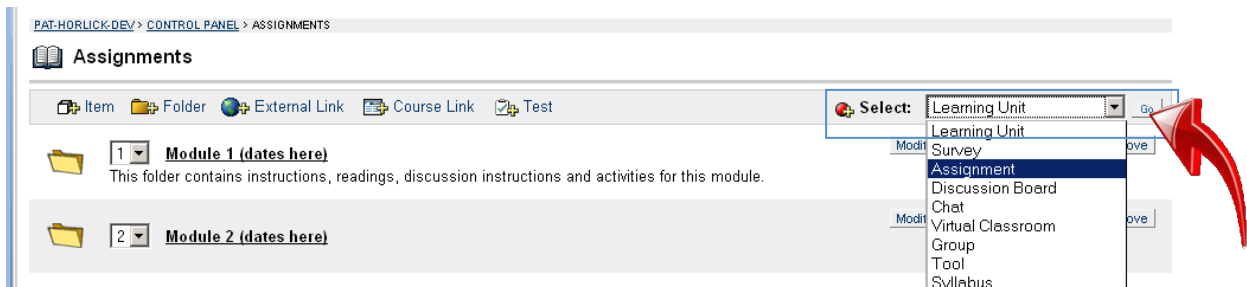
To add a **Course Link**, go the **Control Panel** and choose **Assignments** from the **Content Areas** section. If the item is intended to appear in a folder **under** the Assignments page, go to that folder. Click the **Course Link** icon. In the **Section 1** area, provide a name and the text that you want to appear on the page for this item. In **Section 2**, browse to the course location you want to link to. In **Section 3**, indicate whether or not you want the link to be available to student and apply other settings. Press **Submit**. If you want to add multiple files to this link, on the Assignments page, click the **Modify** button for this Item and repeat the steps to attach a file for every file you want to add.

Adding an Assignment (allows students to submit exercises)

Blackboard uses the same word to describe two different components, which is confusing. Not only does Assignment refer to the page that contains all course learning activities, but the word **Assignment** also applies specifically to exercises and other activities that require the student to submit a document or other file online (for example homework assignments).

Here are the steps to create this type of assignment:

- Go to the **Control Panel**, then **Assignments**. If you want the assignment to be listed in a folder inside the **Assignments** folder, go into that folder.
- Select **Assignment** from the **Drop Down** list at the top right of the page, then click **Go**.



- Provide an assignment name, the points for the assignment, and instructions to the student (see the Best Practices note below for sample instructions). You can also browse to any files you wish to provide along with the assignment instructions (for example a document that you want the students to refer to). Make sure the assignment is set to **Available** (or not if you don't want it to be available yet), and set the available dates if you want to restrict these.
- When you click **Submit**, the assignment will be added to your assignment list, and also into the grade book.
- You can change the location of this assignment in the list by changing the order number next to the assignment.

- You will also want to go the grade book and add a weighted percentage for this assignment as part of the overall grade and you may also wanted to reorder its location in the grade book. See the handout on grade books for more information.
- When the students see the assignment, they will see a link "**View/Complete Assignment**". If you have included a file for them to download, they may be confused since they won't see this unless they click the View/Complete Assignment link. Provide clear assignment instructions.

Best Practices: Helping students understand how to complete an assignment:

In case this is helpful, here are some general instructions that you can give your students to help them submit their work successfully in Blackboard. You can copy/paste these into your assignment instructions and modify them for your purposes.

Sample Directions for Students:

Click the View/Complete Assignment link and read section (1) Assignment Information, which provides instructions to complete the assignment and includes links to any documents or files associated with the assignment.

When you have completed the assignment, return here and click the View/Complete Assignment link again. This time, refer to section (2) Assignment Materials. This section allows you to browse to the file that contains your assignment on your disk. When you have located your file, click Submit to submit the assignment to your instructor. You may also add any comments you want to send to the instructor.

Once your assignment has been submitted, your Grade Book will show an exclamation mark (!). This indicates that you have submitted the assignment but it has not yet been graded. When the instructor grades your assignment, the exclamation mark will become an actual grade. If you click on your grade you can then read any comments that the instructor has provided.

Submitting Multiple Files for a Single Assignment

You can create an assignment that requires students to submit multiple files. In this case it's important that the student knows to add ALL the files before submitting. Here are some instructions that you can use for this type of assignment submission:

Click the "View/Complete Assignment" link for the assignment.

Go to "Attach local file" and click the Browse button to locate the first file you wish to upload.

Once you have added that file and BEFORE you click the Submit button, click "Add Another File" to upload the next file.

Continue for all the files you need to submit.

ONLY when you have uploaded ALL the files for the assignment, click the Submit button. Your files will be submitted to Blackboard.

Note: if students must submit more than a few files, you will probably prefer for them to zip all the files into a single file – see below.

Submitting Zip files

If the students must submit multiple files for a single assignment, consider requiring them to submit these as a single zip file. This will make things much easier for you. Also tell your students NOT to zip together files from multiple assignments. Be sure that students know that they cannot attach zip files to email messages – the campus mail system rejects email that contains zip attachments.

Providing Documents with Your Assignment Instructions

You may want students to modify or work from a document that you provide when completing an assignment, or to download a set of zipped files, refer to a document for reference, rubrics, or to obtain a data set. Documents could be Word, PDF, spreadsheets, text files, images, etc. You can provide the files as a part of your assignment:


1. In the **Control Panel**, choose **Assignments**. Either create an assignment (see above), or go to an existing assignment and choose **Modify**.
2. Scroll down to "**Step 2: Attach files**". You can browse to the file that you wish to provide and submit this. You can repeat this for each file that you wish to provide.
3. Go back up to Step 1 and include some appropriate instructions. For example "Before starting this assignment, click View/Complete Assignment and download or open the document named "Chapter1ReportRequirements.doc". This short document explains what you must do to complete the assignment, and how the assignment will be graded."
4. When the students look at their assignment list they will see these instructions and can click the document to view it.

Retrieving and Grading Assignments

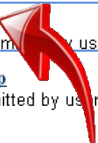
In your Gradebook, find the student whose assignment you would like to review and click on the "**!**" link next to the student's name in the corresponding assignment column ("**!**" means "needs grading"). To view the student's submission, click the **View** button. You will see link to the student's file. Click this to open or save the file. When you are ready to enter the grade and any comments, enter the grade and any feedback that you wish to provide. If you have provided comments in the student's document you can attach this (or any file) along with your grade.

Best practices: Instead of opening each student's file individually, it can save you time to save student submission at once for a particular assignment. Blackboard allows you to do this as a single zip file.

PAT-HORLICK-DEV > CONTROL PANEL > GRADEBOOK > ITEM OPTIONS: A!

 **Item Options: Assignment 1:**

- ▶ **Item Grade List**
View and modify users' grades.
- ▶ **Item Detail**
View detailed statistics for the Gradebook item.
- ▶ **Item Information**
Modify the name, description, availability, and other p
- ▶ **Item Download**
Download files submitted by users for this item.
- ▶ **Item File Cleanup**
Remove files submitted by users for this item.



In your Gradebook, instead of clicking on an individual student submission, click the column heading for the assignment, for example "Assignment 1".

Now choose **Item Download** from the Item Options list, You can select any number of students whose assignment you want to download, or select All Students or All Ungraded (very useful). Click '**Submit**'.

After you click on **Submit**, Blackboard creates a .zip file. That zip file is a compressed file that contains all of the assignment files.

Using the Digital Drop Box

As an alternative to creating an Assignment, if you want students to submit work but don't want these submissions to be directly associated with the grade book, you can add an Item with your instructions, and direct students to use the **Digital Drop Box** to submit their work. The students can access the Digital Drop Box under Tools. This allows them to **Add File** or **Send File**. Your assignment instructions should tell them that when they wish to submit they should go to the **Drop Box** and choose **Send File**. (This is important — if they choose **Add File** the file is uploaded to their personal account but it is **not** sent to the instructor.)

When they send something via the Digital Drop Box, it is not directly associated with any assignment or the grade book — it's just a way for students to send files to the instructor. The instructor must check the Drop Box under **Control Panel** to see and received these files (your instructions might ask students to send an email when they submit to the Drop Box). The instructor can download and grade the work and enter the grades in the grade book manually (if the grade book is being used for this purpose).

NOTE: Another useful feature of the Drop Box. When students forget to bring their disks (never happens, right?), you can tell them that they can use the **Add File** feature of the Drop Box to upload their work to Blackboard and then download it when they get home.