



Use the Blog Tool

Overview

A blog—a shorthand term that means web log—is a personal online journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public access and use. Most blogs also have some kind of commenting system, so that people can respond to and interact with one another. Blogs encourage students to clearly express their ideas and addresses the need to expand various aspects of social learning. Moreover, they are an effective means of gaining insight into students' activities and provide a way to share the knowledge and materials collected.

In Blackboard Learn, instructors create and manage blogs, and only enrolled users can view and create entries and comments in them.

Blog Types in Blackboard Learn

In Blackboard Learn, blogs consist of two elements:

- **Blog entries:** Text, images, links, multimedia, mashups, and attachments added by course members open for comments.
- **Comments:** Remarks or responses to blog entries made by other course members, including the instructor.

You can choose to allow students to participate in blogs in three ways:

- **Course Blogs:** You can create a course blog and determines the topic to be addressed. All course members can add blog entries and add comments to blog entries.
- **Individual Blogs:** You can create a blog for individual course members to use. However, only you are able to add blog entries. All other course members can view and add comments.
- **Group Blogs:** If you enable the blogs tool for a group of users:
 - Group members can add blog entries and make comments on blog entries, building upon one another.
 - All course members can view group blogs, but non-group members can only add comments.

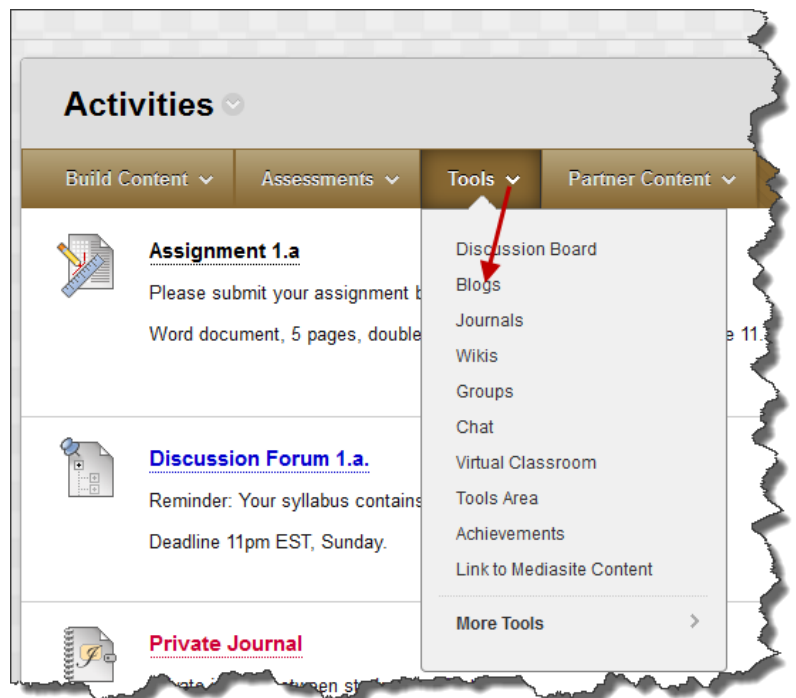
You have full control over all blogs in your course and can edit and delete entries in any of the blog types. You can also delete user comments.

You can use blog writing assignments as another medium for reflective learning. With this type of assignment, students are expected to display their research, analytical, and communication skills through a series of commentaries meant for public consumption and comment. In the course environment, only enrolled users can view blogs. Similar to journals, you can use blogs for a graded assignment or gather opinions and information without assigning a grade.

You can create one or more blogs for use by students. You must create blog topics before students can add their entries.

How to Create a Blog Topic

1. On the Control Panel, expand the Course Tools section and select Blogs.
 - a. OR, go to a content area where you want a blog link and choose Tools > Blogs. In the screenshot below, the content area is called Activities; you will choose your own content area or create a new one.
2. On the Blogs listing page, click Create Blog on the action bar.
3. On the Create Blog page, type a Name for the blog.
4. Type optional Instructions for the blog. Format the text and add images, links, multimedia, mashups, and attachments using the functions in the content editor, if needed. Attachments you add using the content editor can be launched in a new window and have alternate text added to describe the attachment. Any files you upload from your computer are saved in Course Files or the Content Collection in the top-level folder.
5. For Blog Availability, select the Yes option to make it available to users.
6. For Blog Date and Time Restrictions, you can set a blog to display on a specific date and time and to stop displaying on a specific date and time. Select the Display After and Display Until check boxes to enable the date and time selections. Use the pop-up Date Selection Calendar and Time Selection Menu to select dates and times or type dates and times in the boxes. Display restrictions do not affect the blog availability, only when it appears.
7. In the Blog Participation section, select Individual to All Students or Course.
 - Optionally, select Allow Anonymous Comments for individual blogs or Allow Anonymous Entries and Comments for course and group blogs.
8. In the Blog Settings section, select Monthly or Weekly Index Entries.
 - Optionally, select the check box to Allow Users to Edit and Delete Entries.
 - Optionally, select the check box to Allow Users to Delete Comments.



9. In the Grade Settings section, select the Grade option and type the number of Points possible. You can also check No Grading. Points possible will apply to one or more entries made by the user to the blog topic. After you enable grading, a column is created automatically in the Grade Center. *It is permanently gradable, and you cannot change the setting to No grading.*
 - Optionally, select the check box for Show participants in needs grading status and from the drop-down list, select the number of entries required. Applying this setting will show the needs grading icon in the Grade Center and place the entries in the queue on the Needs Grading page after the specified number of entries are made.
 - Optionally, associate a rubric by pointing to Add Rubric to access the drop-down list.
10. Click Submit.

The blog topics appear in alphabetical order on the Blogs listing page. You can sort columns by clicking the column title or caret. You can also provide links to blogs in course areas such as content areas, learning modules, lesson plans, and folders.

How to Create Blog Entries

You and your students create blog entries and other course members can make comments on the entries. As the instructor, you can use blog entries to provide structure for discussions on class topics and other issues.

On the Blogs listing page, following each blog title, students can see if the blog belongs to a group, the course, or to individual students. All course members can read group blogs, but to make an entry, a user must be a group member.

1. On the Blogs listing page, select a blog title.
2. On the blog's topic page, click Create Blog Entry on the action bar.
3. On the Create Blog Entry page, type a Title for the blog entry.
4. Type text in the Entry Message box.
 - Optionally, format the text and add images, links, multimedia, mashups, and attachments using the functions in the content editor.
 - Attachments you add using the content editor can be launched in a new window and have alternate text added to describe the attachment.
5. If enabled and appropriate, select the check box for Post Entry as Anonymous
6. In the Blog Entry Files section, browse for a file to attach to the blog entry.
7. Click Post Entry to submit the blog entry or click Save Entry as Draft to add the entry later.
8. Viewing Drafts: To view or add to saved drafts, click View Drafts on the action bar on the Blogs listing page.

How to Comment on a Blog Entry

Because blogs are meant to be read by others, students can comment on one another's blog entries, whether they belong to an individual, the course, or a group. You determine if comments can be made anonymously or deleted. You can delete any user's comment by clicking the X. After they are posted, users cannot edit their comments.

1. On the Blogs listing page, select a blog title.
2. On the blog's topic page, select a blog to view by selecting the user's name in the side panel in the View Entries by section. The user's blog entries open in the content frame.
3. Click Comment following the user's entry. The Comment box appears.
4. Type a comment in the Comment box.
5. Click spellcheck at the bottom of the Comment box to check the spelling of the content before continuing.
6. If enabled and appropriate, select the check box for Comment on Entry as Anonymous.
7. Click Add. Click the Comments link below the entry to view the comment.