Build Your Course Using Course Structures

Blackboard’s web page on Course Structure: Go here.

Blackboard’s Course Structure FAQ’s: Go here.

Good to Know

It is best to start from scratch with a clean course shell, but you can choose a course structure for an existing course. (Keep in mind, you will have some edits and revisions, such as navigational changes, if you change the structure in a course already built.) Your selected course structure’s content is added to your course and does not replace existing menu items and/or content. You can delete unnecessary or unwanted items, such as menu items and content examples (if you have chosen for content examples to be added – see text box below).

If you change your mind about a structure you added, click Existing Menu in the course structures list and click Use This Structure. No changes are made to your course. You may, however, have to delete unwanted menu items.

Course Structure vs. Course Theme:
The Course Structure feature is different from Course Theme feature, where you can change the color of the menu, buttons, controls and background image. Themes (colors, background image) do not affect course content or a chosen course structure; changing the theme is strictly for the purpose of changing the appearance or look of the course.

Optional Content Examples: IF you decide to include Blackboard’s content examples when you create a new course structure, your course will contain:

- Pedagogical information
- Step-by-step instructions
- Teaching tips
- Links to video tutorials and Blackboard help topics
- Course material such as content items, tools, assignments, tests, surveys, announcements, web links, and mashups.

Note: Content examples are unavailable to students. Content examples have a distinct visual style that is removed automatically when an item is made available. For most course structures, the topic of oceanography is used. The sample items demonstrate how you can use items and tools with your teaching method. You have the option to edit these items and make them available so that students can view them OR delete them and create new items. When you add a course structure to your course, a folder named “sample_content” is added to your course’s Course Files or Content Collection.

Experienced Users: Remember, if you have experience using the tools and features in Blackboard and are comfortable adding different types of content, you can exclude content examples. Your newly chosen structure’s course menu links will be added; however, they will be empty until you add your own content.
Where Do I Find Course Structures?

Deciding on a Structure

Before you click “Use This Structure,” you will see a description of the course structure once you click the name of a structure. You will also be able to visualize what your menu bar will look like. We recommend you skip the structures under the category “Focus on Systems.”

How to Select a Course Structure

1. Control Panel > Customization > Teaching Style.
2. From Teaching Style page, you will see a Select Course Structure section.
   a. The left column displays all course structures in a list.
   b. Click different course structures to view descriptions and preview course menus. In the preview, click a course menu link to learn the purpose of that item in the course structure.

“If I choose a course structure and use it throughout the semester, will the structure copy if I do a course copy next semester?

Yes
3. Choose a course structure, once you have made your decision. (See Figure 1 below for a list of course structures in categories.) Click **Use This Structure**. Your chosen course structure is indicated by a green check mark at the top of the course structure selection tool.

4. After choosing your course structure, you will see the “Include content examples for...” check box. Check the box to add *example/optional content items and instructions*, as well as the course structure’s menu links. *If you do not include the content examples, only menu links are added to your course.* Go back to page 1 text box for optional content examples. (Users brand new to Blackboard might consider including the optional content. Experienced Blackboard users might decide to skip the optional content.)

   a. Click **Submit** to import the course structure and optional content examples to your course. *Or, click Cancel to exit without making changes to your course.*

*Figure 1: List of Structures Categorized by Course Focus*

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**Activity Focused**
- Activity
- Case Study
- Project Format
- Constructivism
- Expedition-Based
- Experiential Learning
- Lab Format

**Content Focused**
- by Chapter
- by Lecture
- by Lesson
- by Module
- by Subject
- by Topic
- by Unit
- Science-Focused
- Traditional

**Communication Focused**
- Cooperative Learning
- Guided Discussion
- Social Learning

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**Extra:** If you are interested in seeing how other instructors design and build their Blackboard courses, take a look at Blackboard’s Exemplary Course winners @ [http://www.blackboard.com/community/catalyst-awards/past-winners.aspx](http://www.blackboard.com/community/catalyst-awards/past-winners.aspx). Click “Exemplary Course” to see the list of award-winning courses from 2014. Some have links to presentations where you can view the course design in Blackboard and listen to the instructor’s motivation and justification for his or her course design. There is a wide cross-section of courses to view from higher ed institutions in and out of the U.S., including Issues in Early Childhood Education, Global Strategic Management, Statistics, Instructional Media and Technology, Issues in Health Professions, Academic Writing, and more.