

# *Blackboard Basics*

Summer 2007 Update – v5

Matthew Weathers, Biola University

[www.biola.edu/admin/clear](http://www.biola.edu/admin/clear)

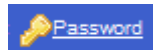
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## Topics

- Creating the Look & Feel of Your Course
- Managing Users / TA's
- Announcements
- Gradebook
- Course Documents (Content Areas)

## Introduction – Logging In, Passwords

An account has already been created for you. The username is your ID number, and you can find the password on the Biola Portal site, <https://portal.biola.edu/Portal>. Log in and then click on the **Password** icon at the top, then on the **Blackboard** tab. These icons look like this:



Once you know your username and password go to <http://biola.blackboard.com/> and click the **User Login** button, then fill in your account information and click **Login**:



**Have an Account? Login Here.**

Enter login information here and click the **Login** button below.

Username:

Password:

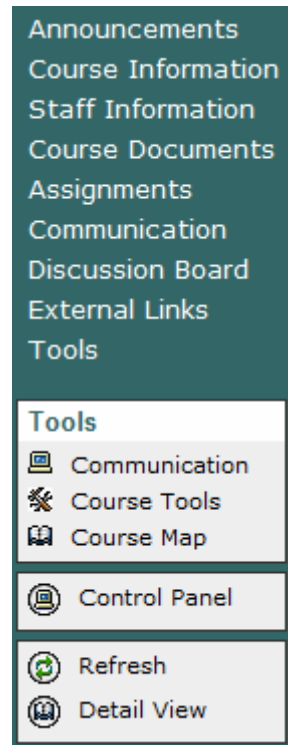
[Forgot password?](#)

If you are having trouble figuring out your password, click “Forgot password?”. Remember: your “Username” is your Biola ID number.

## Classes and Control Panel

When you first log in, you will see the “My Biola” screen, which should show a list of all the classes you are teaching or taking (including classes from past semesters – you can use those for practice). Click on one of those links to take you to the main page for that class. Along the left hand side of the screen, you will see a list of links (See figure at right). This is the same view of the class that your students will see, except for one link: the link to the **Control Panel**. Click on that link.

This takes you to the **Control Panel**. This is your base of operations for making changes and updates to the course. Only you have access to this page (And the T.A.’s and Graders, if you have designated any).



The **Control Panel** will look something like this:

GNST_102_22: First Year Sem: Math/Comp Sci - Matthew Weathers (Instructor)	
<b>Content Areas</b>	
<a href="#">Course Information</a>	<a href="#">Assignments</a>
<a href="#">Course Documents</a>	<a href="#">External Links</a>
<b>Course Tools</b>	
<a href="#">Announcements</a>	<a href="#">Collaboration</a>
<a href="#">Staff Information</a>	<a href="#">Digital Dropbox</a>
<a href="#">Tasks</a>	<a href="#">Glossary Manager</a>
<a href="#">Send Email</a>	<a href="#">Messages</a>
<a href="#">Discussion Board</a>	
<b>Course Options</b>	
<a href="#">Manage Course Menu</a>	<a href="#">Course Copy</a>
<a href="#">Course Design</a>	<a href="#">Import Course Cartridge</a>
<a href="#">Manage Tools</a>	<a href="#">Import Package</a>
<a href="#">Settings</a>	<a href="#">Export Course</a>
<a href="#">Recycle Course</a>	<a href="#">Archive Course</a>
<b>User Management</b>	
<a href="#">List / Modify Users</a>	<a href="#">Enroll User</a>
<a href="#">Create User</a>	<a href="#">Remove Users from Course</a>
<a href="#">Batch Create Users</a>	
<a href="#">Manage Groups</a>	
<b>Assessment</b>	
<a href="#">Test Manager</a>	<a href="#">Gradebook</a>
<a href="#">Survey Manager</a>	<a href="#">Gradebook Views</a>
<a href="#">Pool Manager</a>	<a href="#">Performance Dashboard</a>
<a href="#">Course Statistics</a>	
<b>Help</b>	
<a href="#">Support</a>	
<a href="#">Manual</a>	
<a href="#">Contact System Administrator</a>	





The remainder of this document describes how to use some of the different parts of this **Control Panel** to set up your class. This **Control Panel** is just for one class. If you want to go to another class, click on the “My Biola” tab at the top of the screen to go back to your main page and select another course.

# Creating the Look & Feel of Your Course

Blackboard has a lot of options and features. By default, most of them are turned on. It's a good idea to turn off the tools you will not use for the class, to avoid confusing students, and so there aren't empty sections of your course. Also, it's helpful to add a little customization to the design of your course so students will easily recognize that they're on the right page. These settings are under the **Course Options** section. These are the three areas you will most likely use to set up your course:

## **Manage Course Menu**

To view changes in the course view, refresh the Course Menu.

Add  Content Area  Tool Link  Course Link  External Link

1	▼	<b>Announcements</b>	Modify	Remove
		<i>Announcements</i>		
2	▼	<b>Course Information</b>	Modify	Remove
		<i>Content Area</i>		
3	▼	<b>Staff Information</b>	Modify	Remove
		<i>Staff Information</i>		
4	▼	<b>Course Documents</b>	Modify	Remove
		<i>Content Area</i>		

*Continues...*

## **Course Design**

- ▶ **Course Menu Design**  
Set Menu style and properties for the course.
- ▶ **Manage Menu Display Options**  
Select course menu display options and defaults.
- ▶ **Manage Tool Panel**  
Manage the tool panel displayed on the course menu.
- ▶ **Course Banner**  
Add or remove a banner image on the Announcements page in the course.

## **Manage Tools**

- ▶ **Tool Availability**  
Manage the availability of tools.
- ▶ **Building Block Tool Availability**  
Manage the availability of Building Block tools.
- ▶ **Content Type Availability**  
Manage the availability of Content Types.

Start with the **Course Design > Course Menu Design**. You can choose the style and color of the buttons that will appear. Once you make the changes, click **Submit**, then go back to the class' main web page to see what it looks like. Notice that you can use the navigation guide along the top to easily go back:

[COURSES](#) > [THE NATURE OF MATHEMATICS](#) > [CONTROL PANEL](#) > [COURSE DESIGN](#) > [COURSE MENU DESIGN](#)

Next, go to **Course Design > Manage Menu Display Options**. There's only one option here, and I recommend setting it to look like this:

**1 Course Menu Display**  
Choose the default view of the Course Menu.  
**Default Menu View**  Detail View  Quick View  
 Allow use of both views

You can add a customized banner image under **Course Design > Course Banner**. This allows you to make kind of a title page for your class web site. You can upload any image in JPEG format. For example, I used this banner for one of my classes:



It's fairly easy to make images like this if you know how to use Excel or Word. Just put together some words and pictures in either program, then use the screenshot feature of a photo editor program to copy the image and crop then save it as a JPEG picture.

You can use the **Manage Tools > Tool Availability** menu to turn off all of the tools you do no plan to use in your class, so that the only things left

on a student's menu will be useful things. You can always change your mind later, if you decide you want to use a tool. There's a confusing array of choices. Here is a summary of some of the common tools.

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Should I Use it?</b>
Announcements	For posting announcements that appear on the main page	Yes.
Collaboration	An area where students can share documents for group projects, etc.	Maybe, if you have group projects.
Content Area	Where you can post documents	Maybe.
Dropbox	Where students can "drop" homework assignments	Maybe, if you want to be able to accept electronic submissions
Email	An email system within Blackboard.	Maybe. But BUBBS works well, too.
Gradebook	Keep track of students' grades	Yes! This is the main reason I use BB.
Manual	An online manual for using Blackboard	Yes. But I haven't used it much.
My Grades	Allow students to see their part of your grade book.	Yes. Again, the main reason I use BB..
Roster	List of students.	Yes. It's available on Biola Portal, too.
Performance Dashboard	Allows you to see which students have logged in	Yes. It's handy to gauge participation
Staff Information	Area for info about yourself.	Maybe.

When in doubt, I recommend just leaving it checked (available). This list is just whether the tool can be used later. The **Course Menu** determines if it's visible to students or not.

## Managing the Course Menu

Next, go to the **Control Panel > Manage Course Menu** screen. This is where you can choose which buttons will show up on this course. I would suggest at a minimum, keeping the **Announcements** button, and the **Tools** button.

If there are items you are not going to use in your class, remove them from the **Course Menu** by clicking the **Remove** button. You can easily add them back later if you change your mind.

You can also use this menu to change the order of the buttons and the names on the buttons in the menu.

## Modifying the Tools Area

From this **Manage Course Menu** screen, click on the **Modify** button next to the **Tools** menu item (by default, it's the last one on the list). I recommend making the following changes (see figure).

The **Address Book** feature allows students to keep track of address & contact information, but in my experience, most students already do that elsewhere. Same thing for the **Calendar** feature. The **Digital Dropbox** is for accepting electronic submissions.

The screenshot shows the 'Update Tools / Grades Area' interface. It is divided into two main sections: 'Set Area Properties' and 'Tools Availability'.

**Set Area Properties:**

- Type:** Tools Area
- Name:** Tools / Grades (with a dropdown menu and a text input field containing 'Tools / Grades'). A red box highlights the text input field with the message: 'Suggested maximum 18 characters. Longer names or names that use wide characters may cause problems with the button Menu style. See Course Menu Design under Course Design to change Menu style.'
- Allow Guest access:**
- Allow Observer access:**
- Available for Student/Participant users:**

**Tools Availability:**

Tool availability:	Available	Unavailable
Address Book	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Calendar	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Digital Dropbox	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Glossary	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Homepage	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
My Grades	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal Information	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tasks	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Electric Blackboard®	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
User Manual	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Students can create their own homepages on BUBBS, facebook.com, or MySpace.com, so they don't need the **Homepage** feature here. The **Tasks** feature lets students keep a list of things to do, and you can add assignments to their task list.

The **My Grades** and **Personal Information** sections are the two most-used tools in my experience, so be sure to leave those available, at a minimum.

Don't be afraid to try things out, you can make changes later. In general, I recommend starting with fewer options at the beginning of the semester then if you decide to add a feature to your class page, add it later. Ideally, everything that students see in your Blackboard class should have some purpose or usefulness.

## Managing Users

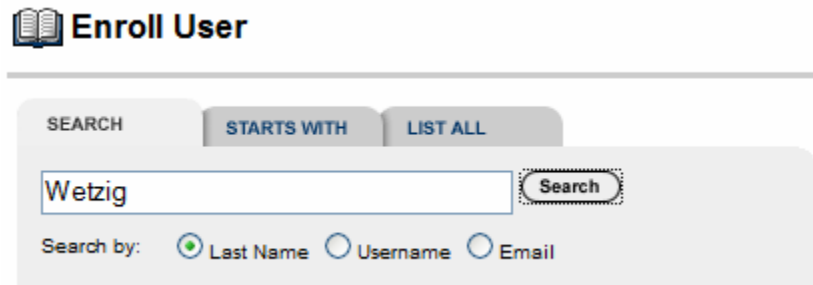
During registration and during the first few weeks of the semester, students automatically get enrolled in your Blackboard class as they add the class. This happens once per day, at night. So normally, you will not have to change the list of "users" of your class. Usually, there are two categories of users for your class: the instructor and the students.

If someone adds your class, they will automatically be added to this student list in Blackboard, but if someone drops, they will not be removed. You can remove them through the **Control Panel > Remove Users from Course** link. However, I recommend just leaving them in there until the end, or at least through the last day to drop a class then remove them all at once, so you will have a consistent class list.

If you are teaching a Summer Session or Interterm class, students will not be automatically added to your Blackboard class, and you will need to contact Matthew Weathers, so they can be added.

## Adding a Teaching Assistant

If you use TA's, you will need to add them to the course. To do this, choose **Control Panel > Enroll User**. You can then search for your TA's name by last name or Username (their ID number):



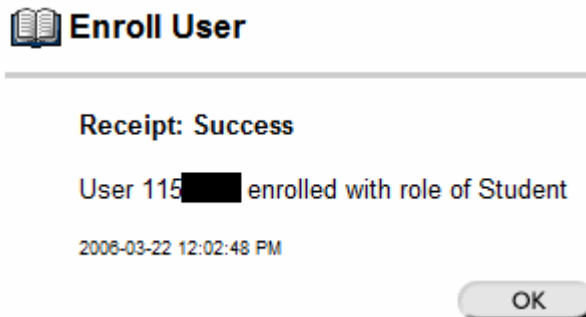
**Enroll User**

SEARCH   STARTS WITH   LIST ALL

Wetzig   Search

Search by:  Last Name    Username    Email

Click **Search**, then check the **checkbox** next to the name of your TA, then click **Submit**. If everything worked right, it should look like this:



**Enroll User**

Receipt: Success

User 115[redacted] enrolled with role of Student

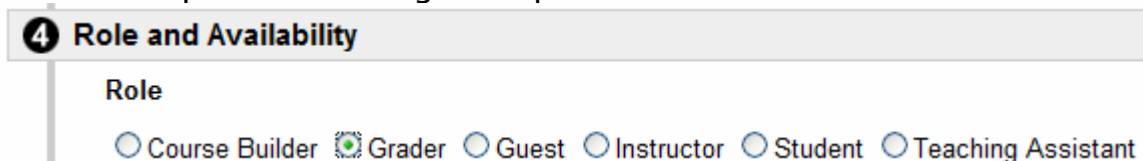
2006-03-22 12:02:48 PM

OK

Click **OK**. Notice that by default, this person was enrolled as a Student. To make them a TA, go back to **Control Panel > List / Modify Users**, and search for that person again. When you find them, it looks like this:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Username</u>	<u>Email</u>	<u>Role</u>		
Wetzig, Randall	115[redacted]	<a href="mailto:Randall.J.Wetzig@biola.edu">Randall.J.Wetzig@biola.edu</a>	Student	Password	Properties

Click on Properties to change that person's role to **Grader** or **TA**:



**4 Role and Availability**

Role

Course Builder    Grader    Guest    Instructor    Student    Teaching Assistant

A **Grader** can only change grades. A **Teaching Assistant** can also add assignment columns in the grade book.

## Announcements

Students forget things. I try to remind them in several ways. I usually make one or two announcements in class. I send out emails reminding them of tests & assignments. And I post announcement on my class Blackboard page using the **Announcements** feature.

This feature is fairly self-explanatory. To add an announcement, go to **Control Panel > Announcements**, then click the **Add Announcement** button. Your announcement will show up on students' main pages for seven days, or you can choose a specific time period.







You will usually leave Section 3, the **Course Link** section blank. With it, you can add a link to somewhere else in the course (like instructions for a specific assignment).

## Gradebook

This feature is my main reason for using Blackboard. It allows my TA's and me to enter grades online, and it allows students to immediately see their grades as soon as they're entered. This helps students see missing assignments sooner, and helps me fix grading mistakes throughout the semester, rather than all just at the very end.

To access the gradebook functions, go to **Control Panel > Gradebook**. This will bring up the main spreadsheet which looks like this:

### **Gradebook View Spreadsheet**

 [Add Item](#)  [Manage Items](#)  [Gradebook Settings](#)  [Weight Grades](#)  [Download Grades](#)  [Upload Grades](#)


The first thing you will need to do is add some items. Do this by clicking **Add Item** if you're just adding one item or **Manage Items** if you're going to add several at once. Don't change the **Gradebook Settings**. Also, I

recommend that you don't use **Weight Grades** (until the end of the semester, maybe). The **Download Grades** and **Upload Grades** buttons let you transfer grades between Blackboard and Excel.

When you add and item, name it, add a description, and choose the due date as the date. Also, you will usually want to say **Yes** to both options:

### Add/Modify Gradebook Item

#### 1 Item Information

* Item Name	<input type="text" value="Chapter 3"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assignment</li><li>Attendance</li><li>Essay</li><li>Exam</li><li>Extra Credit</li><li>Final Exam</li><li>Group Project</li><li>Homework</li><li>Journal</li><li>Lab</li><li>Midterm Exam</li><li>Other</li><li>Paper</li><li>Presentation</li><li>Problem Set</li><li>Quiz</li><li>Survey</li></ul>
Category:	<input type="text" value="Assignment"/>	
Description	<input type="text" value="Page 48, #1-#8, #9, and Review Questions #2, #5"/>	
Date	<input type="text" value="Feb"/> <input type="text" value="27"/> <input type="text" value="2006"/> 	
* Points Possible:	<input type="text" value="20"/>	
Display As:	<input type="text" value="Score"/>	

#### 2 Options

Make item available to users.  Yes  No

Include item in Gradebook score calculations.  Yes  No

There are several categories available (see figure above). These are just descriptive, and don't make any difference unless you want Blackboard to weight grades for you by category.

When you're ready to enter grades for an item, click on the item's column from the **Gradebook View Spreadsheet**. This allows you to make changes to that gradebook item. The Item Information will let you change the item using the same screen shown above.

Use the **Item Grade List** to enter grades:

### **Item Options: Chapter 3**

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- ▶ [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 properties of the Gradebook item.

This will show you a list of everyone in the class and let you enter their grades for that one item.

### **Recommendation: Paper System Plus Blackboard**

I recommend using a combination of paper records plus the Blackboard system. You can use the **Download Grades** link to create a version that Excel can read.

### **Download Gradebook**

---

**1 Select Delimiter**

Select the delimiter type for the downloaded file

Delimiter Type:  Comma  Tab

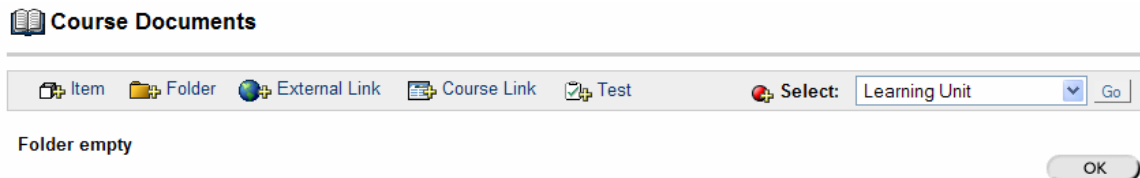
**2 Submit**

Click **Submit** to finish. Click **Cancel** to quit.

Use this Excel file to print some empty grade sheets, and then fill those in by hand as you're grading assignments. Once you're done, type those grades in to Blackboard. That way, you will have a written record, and when entering grades in Blackboard, all the scores will already be in order in the same order as they are in Blackboard.

## Course Documents

Adding content into the content areas of Blackboard is fairly straightforward. Go to **Control Panel > Course Documents**, and you will see this:



Use the add **Item** link to add any kind of document (Word, PDF, Excel files, etc.). You may also decide to organize the **Course Documents** by making folders and subfolders. You can use the add **Folder** link to do this. The **External Link** button is for adding links to web pages. The **Course Link** button lets you add a link to some other location within this Blackboard class. The add **Test** button lets you create an online test.

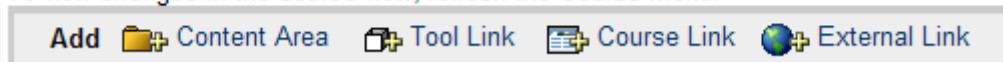
By default, your course will have several **Content Areas** set up already. These just have different names, but they work the same as described above. You can get to any of these content areas from the **Control Panel**.

Content Areas	
<a href="#">Course Information</a>	<a href="#">Assignments</a>
<a href="#">Course Documents</a>	<a href="#">External Links</a>

In addition, you can add a Content Area with any name you want, under **Control Panel > Manage Course Menu**.

### **Manage Course Menu**

To view changes in the course view, refresh the Course Menu.



**Questions?** Find this and other Blackboard documents on our web page, at [www.biola.edu/admin/clear](http://www.biola.edu/admin/clear) or contact Matthew Weathers.