# 10 Best Practices for Using Blackboard

## 1. Start Early
Set up the elements of your course before the first day of class, especially the syllabus and assignment schedule. If the syllabus changes during the semester, make sure you post the revised version or clearly articulate the changes.

## 2. Make It Easy to Navigate
Organize the content of your course into Blackboard modules so that students can easily find what they need. Add images, videos, and interactive lessons where appropriate for visual appeal. Make sure documents and sections are named in a way that is easily accessible. Some faculty simply use Week 1, Week 2 and so on. Others arrange the content by topic. Make sure students know where to upload each assignment or take quizzes and exams.

## 3. Make It Useful
Post all course materials so students can reference them at any time during the course. Let students know if you post new material during the semester. Use Blackboard to send important announcements to students each week and encouraging messages during crucial stress times like just before large assignments are due or during midterm and final exams. Require students to post assignments, participate in discussions with peers, complete exams, take surveys, write journals and/or create blogs in Blackboard.

## 4. Ensure Access
Convert documents to PDF or use links to avoid readability issues. Keep in mind that many students will access the system using a mobile device. Download the mobile app yourself to make sure your content is viewable on a mobile device.

## 5. Welcome Students
Create a welcome video so that they see you as a real person - see this [example](https://example.utdallas.edu) from a UTSA faculty member. As part of your welcome, make sure students have a photo, bio and your contact information.

## 6. Facilitate Introductions
Ask students to introduce themselves on a discussion board and provide a brief bio and photo. This gives students the opportunity to learn about each other in a safe space. Provide your own bio and photo as well.

## 7. Facilitate Questions
Set up a discussion board specifically for course questions. Direct students to post their questions in that thread so that all students can benefit from the answers. This can also free up your time from phone calls and individual meetings with students over simple questions. Let students know how long it may take you to respond.

## 8. Encourage Collaboration
Assign groups in Blackboard with discussion space so that students have a collaborative space to work. Use discussion boards for a purpose, using course content to build community among students and encourage students to critically reflect on a topic with their peers. Find online activities that send students to the site.

## 9. Use the Tools
Blackboard includes tools for grading, journaling, blogging, quizzes, exams, rubrics, glossaries, wikis, and integrating electronic textbook materials. Don’t be afraid to try new ways to engage students using these tools.

## 10. Provide Tech Support Info
Provide students with technology support contact information in case they have problems. This directs them to those who can best help them with technical issues, which is most likely not the faculty.

---

**Need help with Blackboard? Contact us for a one-on-one consultation!**

Dr. Shelley Howell, Teaching and Learning Consultant  
[Shelley.Howell@utsa.edu](mailto:Shelley.Howell@utsa.edu) or 210-458-6778