WTClass Blackboard Learn
Student Guide

Using Blackboard Learn 9.1

Spring 2015

West Texas A&M University
Instructional Technology Services
Help Desk 806-651-4357

Contents

What is WTClass (Blackboard)?

WTClass (Blackboard) is the learning management system that West Texas A&M University uses for online instruction and/or for campus course online resources. The system allows faculty and instructors to provide students access to online course materials, communication tools, online tests, digital submissions, and to post grades.

This WTClass or Blackboard Student Guide is one of many resources about online learning at West Texas A&M University. We are committed to providing you a pleasant and rewarding experience with WTClass/Blackboard and hope the guide will assist you with your online learning needs.

We recommend that you read each section sequentially; however, you may enter or return to sections that will enable you to work successfully with WTClass/Blackboard.

Get your Hardware and Software ready (Technical Requirements)

If you are planning on working on your online course from a computer not connected to the campus network (i.e. off-campus), you should check to see if your computer has the necessary components to access WTClass/Blackboard. We recommend a computer with multimedia capabilities (i.e. sound with speakers), a high speed internet connection, and a supported browser.

- Your choice of a supported browser will need both Java and Javascript for some Blackboard functions to work correctly
- Your browser should accept cookies (use minimum security settings)
- Firewalls and Pop-up blockers may affect your ability to access some tools (Chat, Collaborate, etc.) Turn off pop-up blockers in your browser and any installed toolbars.

Supported Browsers

With **PCs** running Windows OS:
- Internet Explorer (9 or higher) –*not in compatibility mode*
- Mozilla Firefox (24 or higher)
- Google Chrome (30 or higher)

With **Macs** running OS X:
- Mozilla Firefox (24 or higher)
- Apple Safari (5 or higher)
- Google Chrome (30 or higher)

While iPad's, tablets, and phones may generally function with Blackboard, not all tools may function. It is recommended that you use a computer for completing your coursework in Blackboard.

Display Issues

If you are having trouble viewing content, such as videos, you may need to make adjustments to your browser to allow the content to show. Adjustments vary on the browser: http://students.wtamu.edu/wtclass/files/browsers/Content_Display_Issues.pdf

How do I get started? (Logging in)

Step 1: In your browser address window, type in wtclass2.wtamu.edu and press the Enter key on your keyboard.
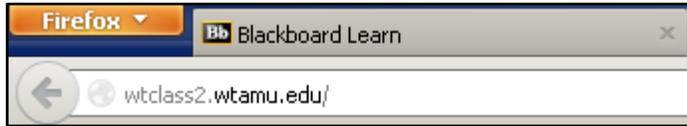
Step 2: In the Username and Password text boxes enter your **Buff Advisor** account information.

If you do not know what your username and password is, you can contact the IT Service Center (ITSC) for assistance by calling (806) 651-4357 or by emailing ITSC@mail.wtamu.edu.

Step 3: Click the **Sign In** button.

Alternate Method

Step 1: In your browser address window, type in http://www.wtamu.edu/ and press the Enter key on your keyboard.

Step 2: Click on the **"My Buff Portal"** button in the right column of the WTAMU home page.

Step 3: In the Username and Password text boxes enter your **Buff Advisor** account information.

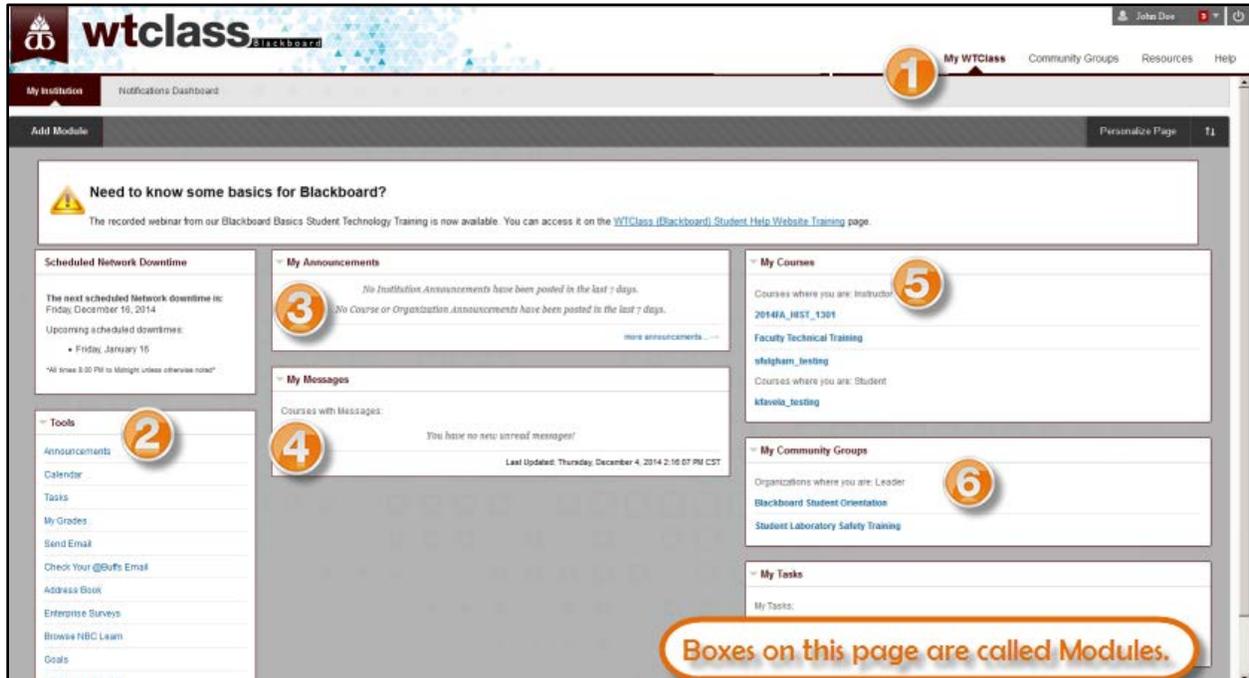***Step 4:*** Click the **Sign In** button.

Step 5: Click on the WTClass icon on the "My Buff Portal" Page to enter WTClass.

Step 6: Enter your WTClass course and use the link provided in the Lessons area to connect to Blackboard.

Navigating the WTClass Blackboard Homepage

Once you have logged into WTClass Blackboard, the home page will appear.

1. **Tabs**- Tabs will connect you to different content or resource areas.

- **My WTClass:** This tab is the home page.
- **Community Groups:** This tab links to a page where Community Groups (Organizations) in which you are enrolled in are listed.
- **Resources:** The Resources tab provides links to common WT information such as Tutoring Services, Advising, or Disability Services.
- **Help**: The Help tab provides quick access to help documents as well as links for how to get additional help from the Help Desk.

2. **Tools –** This module links to frequently used tools.

3. **Announcements** – This module provides links to announcements from the courses you are enrolled in and system announcements.

4. **My Messages** – This module provides a way to access your internal course messages.

5. **My Courses** – All courses you are enrolled in will appear in this module.

6. **My Community Groups** – This module links to all Community Groups you are enrolled in (i.e. Lab Safety Course). The same information can be found on the Community Group tab.

Accessing your Course(s)

Courses are shown in the My Courses Module. This module can be accessed on the My WTClass tab. To enter a course, click on the appropriate course name.
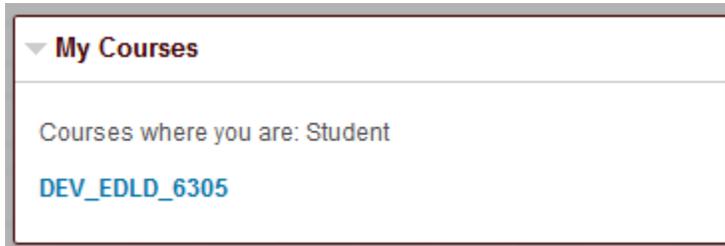

What if my course is not listed?

- You may not be on the official roster. It may take up to 24 hours after registering for a course before it appears on your My Courses list.
- WTClass Blackboard is updated daily however there may be a 24 hour delay when dropping a course.
- Contact the Registrar's office if you have questions on whether you are enrolled in a course.

Navigating your Course

Course Home Page

In most courses, the course will display the course home page which contains modules with information about course events and notifications. The modules function similar to the modules on the My Institution tab. Use the links in modules or on the course menu to navigate to areas in your courses.
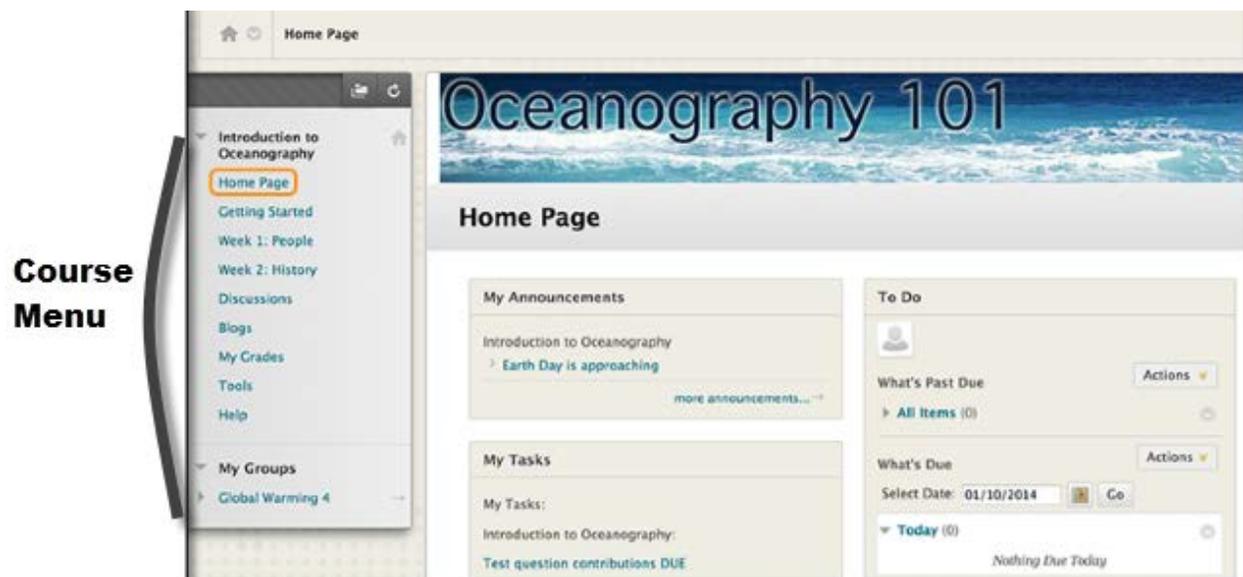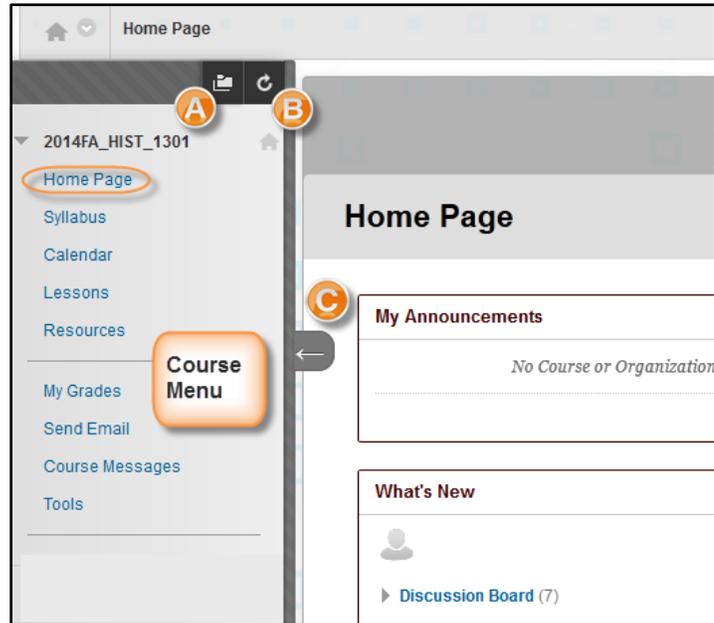
Course Menu

The course menu is the panel on the left side of the interface that contains links to all top-level course areas. Instructors can also provide links to individual tools, websites, course items, and module pages. Instructors control the content and tools available on the course menu.

Instructors can customize the style of the course menu. They can add subheaders and dividers as well as additional links to content and tools. These customizations create variations in the look and organization of your courses.

Typically all information and assignments required for your course will be under an item titled "Content" or "Lessons"

A. Open the course menu in a separate window. The detached menu always displays course materials as a directory tree. You can expand the view to show the hierarchy of course navigation and move the window wherever you want.
B. Refresh your view.
C. Expand or collapse the course menu frame by moving your mouse pointer near the border and clicking the arrow. When you collapse the course menu, you have more room to view content.

Course-to-Course Navigation

While inside one of your courses, you can conveniently access all of the courses you are enrolled in. Access the contextual menu next to the house icon. Click another course title. *The most recently visited course is listed first.*
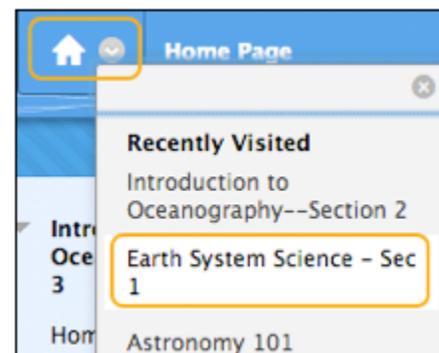
Global Navigation Menu and My Blackboard

My Blackboard, located within the **Global Navigation Menu**, allows you to quickly access course information. You can navigate to your courses, check grades, read discussion messages, and check assignments due.

To access your **My Blackboard Tools**, click on the arrow located to the right of your name at the top of the Blackboard window.

My Blackboard Tools

Tools	Description
	Bb Home: Gives you an overview of the items that are due and recently graded. Move your mouse pointer over View to reveal your grade. Bb Home displays the five most recent activities relevant to you.
	Calendar: Review everything you have due and be reminded of when you need to complete it. .
	Posts: Displays the posts made in the last seven days in the courses and organizations you are enrolled in and follow. For example, you can see when a classmate submits a blog post in your course.
	Updates: Review a list of notifications alerting you to important events and information. For example, you can see when an assignment has been graded.
	My Grades: View your grades for each assignment, test, or activity in all of your courses. Sort the grades by date or course.
	Home
	Help: Go to the WTClass Students Help Website for manuals, tutorials, and more.

Communication Tools

Email
(Your instructor may have this tool disabled and may be using another method for communication in the course, such as Course Messages.)

To send an email through Blackboard, click on the "Send Email" link in the Course Menu.

Select one of the following options:

- **All Users**: Sends email to all users in the course.
- **All Groups**: Sends email to all of the groups in a specified course.
- **All Teaching Assistant Users**: Sends email to all of the Teaching Assistants in a specified course.
- **All Student Users**: Sends an email to all students in the course.
- **All Instructor Users**: Sends email to all of the instructors for a specified course.
- **Select Users**: Sends email to select users.
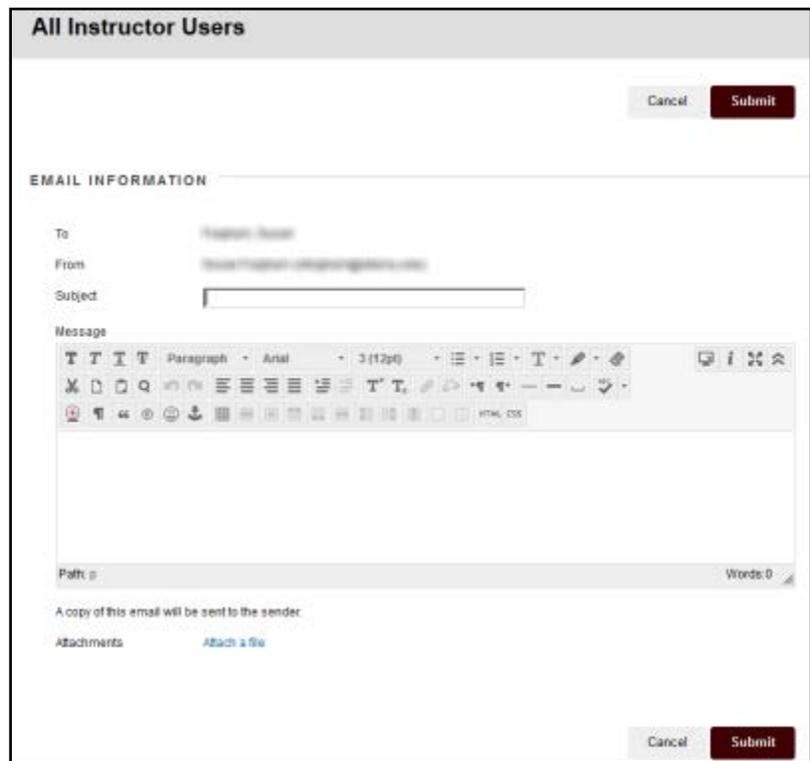- **Select Groups**: Sends email to select groups.

Complete the following steps:

1. Enter a Subject and Message
2. Add an Attachment (optional
3. Click **Submit**

Note: Recipients of each email will not see the email addresses of other recipients.

Although you can send email from WTClass Blackboard, you will have to log into your university student email account (yourname@buffs.wtamu.edu) to read any emails sent from the course (WTClass).

No email is stored inside WTClass/Blackboard.

Course Messages

(Your instructor may have this tool disabled and may be using another method for communication in the course, such as Email.)

You can send course messages to course members. Using the course messages tool instead of the email tool can also be more reliable. Incorrect or out-of-date student email addresses will not affect course communication.
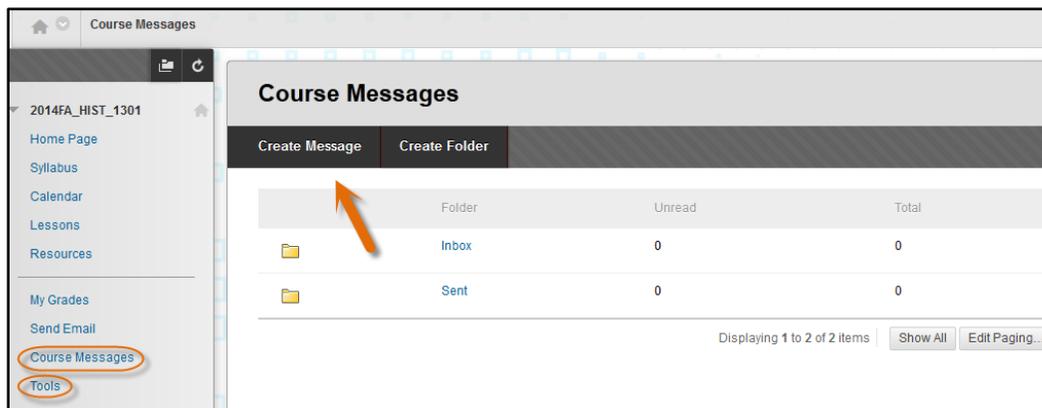

1. On the course menu, click **Course Messages** or **Tools**.
   a. On the Tools page, select **Course Messages**.
2. On the Course Messages page, click **Create Message** on the action bar.
3. On the **Compose Message** page, click **To**, and a list of course members appears.
4. In the **Select Recipients**: **To** line box, select the recipients and click the right-pointing arrow to move them to the **Recipients** box. You can use the Cc, and Bcc functions to send the course message to those users that may be interested in the message, but are not the primary recipients. When using Bcc, other recipients do not know that the users listed in the Bcc field are receiving the message.
5. Type a **Subject**.
6. Type a **message**. Optionally, you can use the content editor to format the Body text.
7. Click **Browse** to select a file to attach to the message. If the message is a reply or a forward, you have the option of including the original attachment.
8. Click **Submit**.

Notifications about unread messages can be viewed from the Course Messages inbox. From the Course Home Page, access the "What's New" module and use the Course Messages link or use the Tools link on the Course Menu and then select **Course Messages**.

Notifications can also been seen from the **My Messages** module located on the **My WTClass** Home Page after logging into Blackboard.
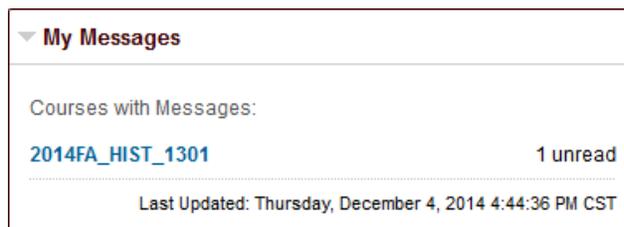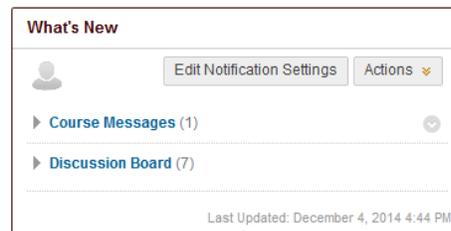
Discussions

The discussion board is a tool for sharing thoughts and ideas about class materials. Course members can replicate the robust discussions that take place in the traditional classroom. An advantage of using the discussion board is its asynchronous nature. Participants do not need to be in the same location or time zone, and can take time to consider their responses carefully.

You can use the discussion board to:

- Meet with your peers for collaboration and social interaction.
- Pose questions about homework assignments, readings, and course content.
- Demonstrate the understanding or application of course material.

How to Access the Discussion Board

1. On the course menu, click **Tools** and select **Discussion Board**.
2. The main **Discussion Board** page appears with a list of available discussion forums. A forum is an area where users discuss a topic or a group of related topics.

The Main Discussion Board Page

A. Click a forum title to view the messages. Forums containing unread posts appear in bold.
B. View data on the number of posts and participants.
C. Click the number in the Unread Posts column for one-click access to a forum's unread messages.

Course groups can have their own discussion boards. Group discussion boards are available only to users who are members of the group. If a group discussion board is available, access it from the groups' link on the course menu or in the My Groups area.

How to Create a Discussion Post

Forum settings control who can post, and what other types of actions you can take, such as editing your own threads, posting anonymously, or rating posts. Depending on which forum settings your instructor has selected, you may be allowed to create a new thread.
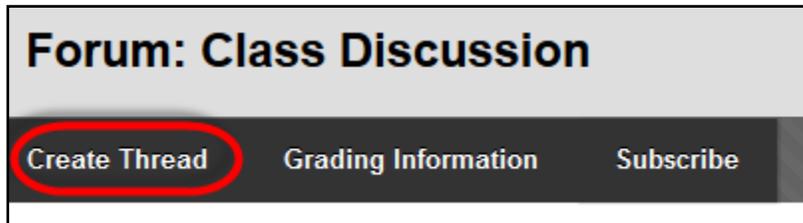
1. Access a discussion forum and click **Create Thread** on the action bar.
2. On the **Create Thread** page, you can view the forum description to refer as you write your response. Type a **Subject** and **Message**. You can use the content editor functions to format the text and add files, images, web links, multimedia, and mashups.
3. Alternatively, in the Attachments section, attach a file, click *Browse My Computer* and upload a file from your computer
4. Click **Submit** to publish your reply.

Rubrics

If your instructor has associated a rubric with the discussion forum or thread and made it available to students, you can view grading criteria before beginning work. Click Grading Information to access the forum or thread's Grade page. Click **View Rubric**.
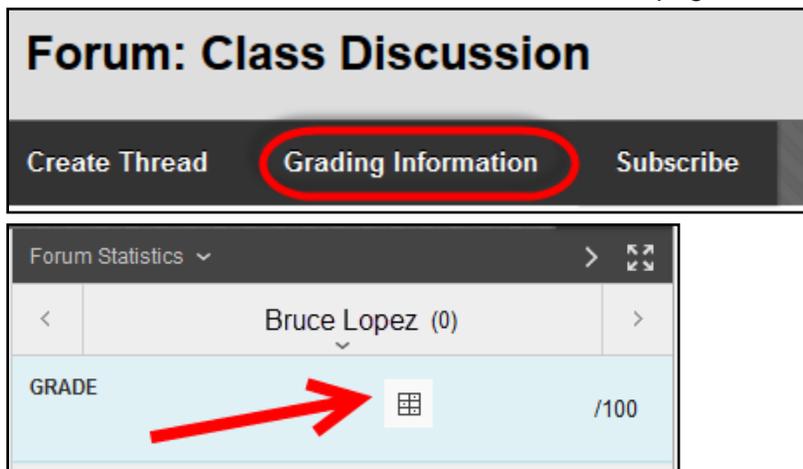
Assignments (drop box)

The assignments tool presents a variety of learning activities. You view and submit assignments from one location. Your instructor designs assignments that require you to:

- Provide text on the Upload Assignment page.
- Attach files from your computer or from the Content Collection.
- Both provide text and attach files.

Assignments list the name, description, and attachments for class work. Your instructor provides you all the information you need to complete the assignment. You can include comments for your instructor before you submit your work.

How to Submit an Assignment

*When you finish your assignment, you must click **Submit**. If you do not, your instructor will not receive your completed assignment.*

If your instructor has not allowed multiple attempts, you can submit assignments only once. Ensure that you have attached any required files to your assignment before you click **Submit**.

1. On the course menu, select the content area that holds the assignment (typically found within a folder for that week, chapter, unit, or module).
2. Click the name of the assignment.
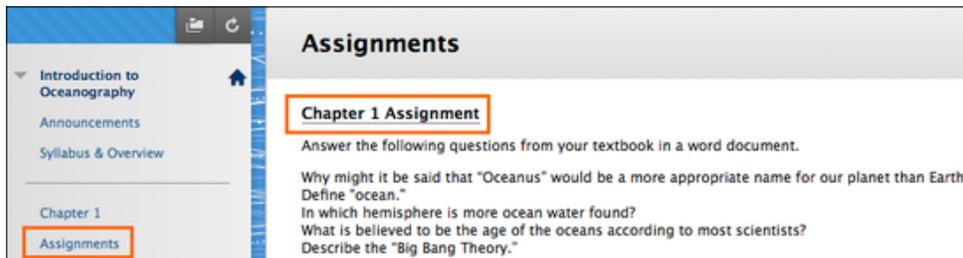
On the **Upload Assignment** page, review the instructions and download any files provided by your instructor. If your instructor is using a rubric and has made it available, click the **View Rubric** button to view grading criteria.
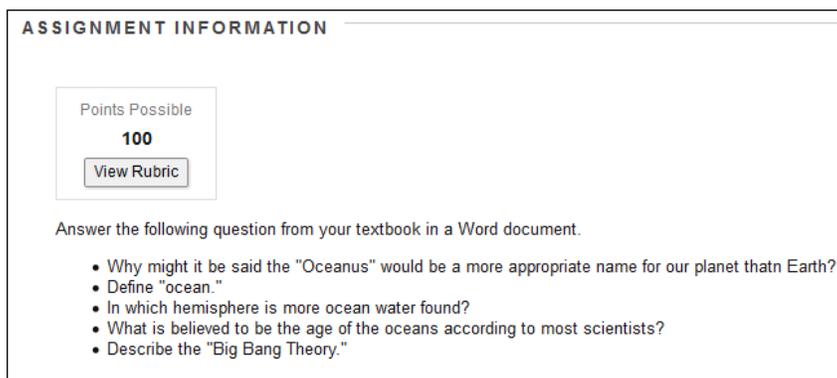
3. Complete the assignment using one or both of the following:

- Click **Write Submission** to expand the Assignment Submission box where you can type your response. You can use the content editor to format text, add files, images, links, multimedia and mashups.
- If your response to the assignment is in a separate file, click **Browse My Computer** and select a file to attach.
    1. If you attach a file, type a **Link Title**. If the box is left blank, the file name becomes the link.
    2. Follow any instructions that your instructor provided for naming your file.
    3. If you have selected the wrong file, you can remove it by clicking **Do not attach**.
    4. If the same file is attached to your assignment more than once, the new file is saved with a number appended to the name. For example, history_assignment(1).doc.

4. Optionally, type comments to your instructor in the Comments box.
5. Click **Submit**.
6. A success message appears, confirming the assignment submission.

The Review Submission History page shows the date and time the assignment was submitted, any comments you have added, and any files that were attached to the assignment.

Tests

Tests are used to assess your mastery over course content and objectives. Your instructor assigns point values to questions in the test. Your answers are submitted for grading, and the results are recorded in the Grade Center. You can view your grades in My Grades when your instructor makes them available to you.

You can find tests in any content area, learning module, lesson plan, or folder.
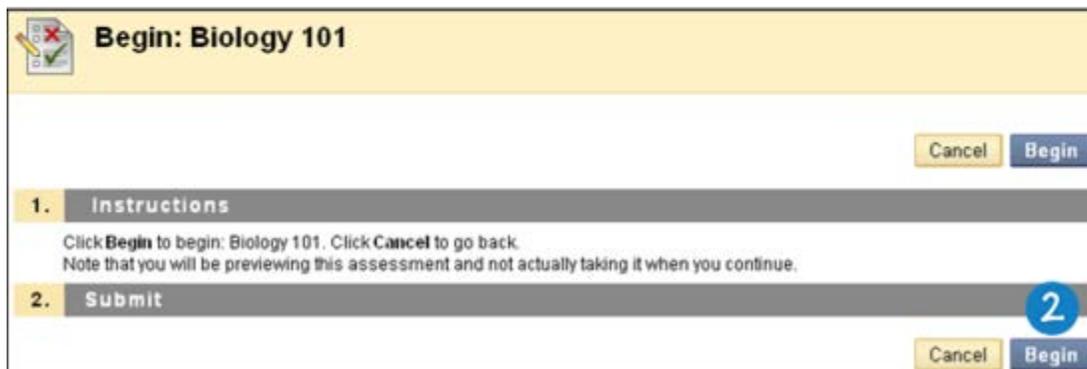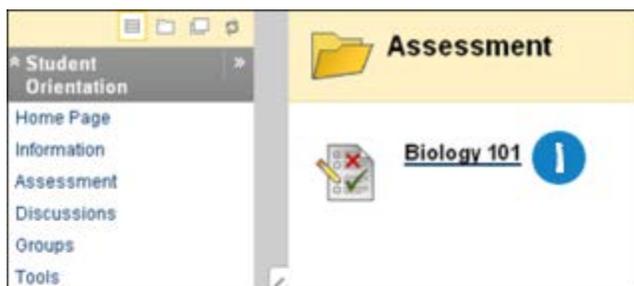
Taking a Test

Your instructor lets you know when a test is available and where to find it in your course. Before you begin, make sure you have a **strong internet connection**. **A wired connection is more reliable than a wireless connection** in some instances. Have any materials you need at hand before you begin. Click the link to launch the test. Read all of the instructions. If you have any trouble taking your test or understanding test questions, **contact your instructor** immediately.

Do not refresh the page, close the window or click the browser's back button while taking a test. If you experience problems during a test contact your instructor immediately.

How to Take a Test

Contact your instructor first if you encounter issues or problems while taking your test.

1. Navigate to the test and click the link associated with it.
2. Click **Begin** to take the test.

3. Your instructor may choose to have you type a password to begin taking a test. If necessary, type the valid password and click **Submit** to begin the test. The test continues to prompt for a valid password until the correct one is provided.

    If no password is required, simply click **Begin** to start the test.

4. As you work, answers will be saved automatically, or you can click **Save** next to each question or **Save All Answers** at the top or bottom of the page as you work.

5. Click **Save and Submit** when you are ready to complete the test and submit it for grading.

> Do not use the browser's back button during a test. This may cause loss of data. If you have difficulties while taking a test contact your instructor.

Timed Tests

If your instructor chooses a timed test, the scheduled time is included in the instructions before you begin.

- You are notified of the instructor's choice of Timer Setting, which determines whether the test saves and submits automatically when time expires, or if you have the option to continue beyond the time limit.
- There is no automatic penalty for continuing beyond the time limit, however, final scoring decisions are made by your instructor. Talk to your instructor if you have questions about this setting.
- The total time you spend on the test is recorded and available to the instructor when the test is submitted.
- If you save and exit the test, the timer continues running. If you start your test on Tuesday, save and exit it, then complete it on Thursday the timer will show that it took you 48 hours to complete the test.
- If the auto-submit feature is selected, when the timer runs out, the test saves and submits and the Test Submitted page appears. If the option is not selected, a pop-up window appears with the choice to submit or continue.

The remaining time appears on the test page. Click the chevron next to the timer to collapse or expand it.
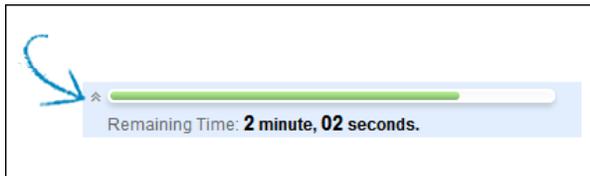
Timer warnings appear when half the time, five minutes, one minute, and thirty seconds remain. When the remaining time reads 1 minute, 30 seconds, the status bar will turn yellow. At 1 minute, the warning will be red, and at 30 seconds, both the status bar and the warning are red. If the timer is collapsed, the color changes are not visible.
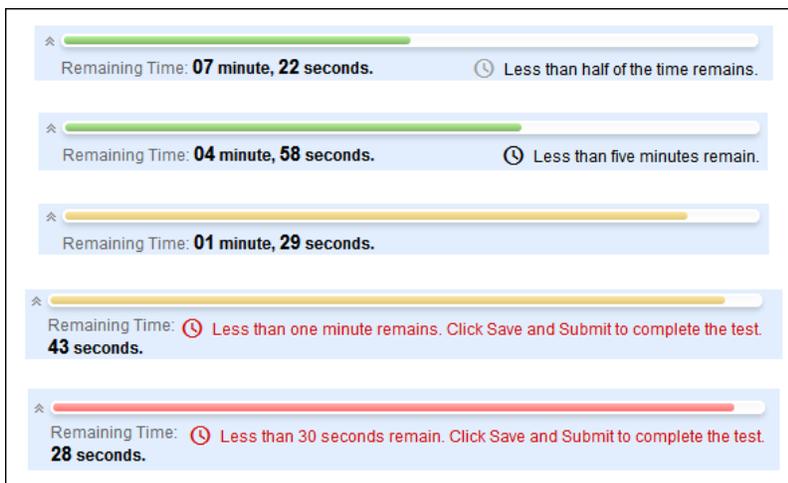
Feedback and Grades

The majority of questions in tests are auto-graded. Your instructor defines the correct answers and assigns a certain number of points to each question when the test is created. The system validates your answers against the key and assigns the score. You may see your score immediately after completing the test if all questions are auto-graded and your instructor releases this information.

Essay questions, file response, and short answer questions are not auto-graded. Your instructor must grade these questions manually. If a test contains these question types, the grade for the test is released after your instructor finishes grading.

If your instructor has associated a rubric with an essay, file response, or short answer question and made it available, View Rubric appears next to the Save Answer function. Click View Rubric to review the criteria your instructor has chosen.

The performance results you receive after completing a test depend on the options selected by your instructor. For example, your instructor may only show the final score for one test, while for another test the final score and correct answers are displayed. Feedback includes one or more of the following:

- Final score for the test
- Answers submitted
- Correct answers
- Feedback for the questions

To access feedback and grade information, select the test in the content area or use My Grades. On the View Attempts page, click the grade link in the Calculated Grade column to access the test, your answers, and any instructor feedback.

If your instructor used a rubric for grading an essay, file response, or short answer test question and made it available, click View Rubric while viewing the graded test to display detailed information.

Retaking a Test

- If you are allowed to take a test multiple times, it is noted at the top of the test.
- If the instructor has placed a limit on the number of attempts, it is also noted at the top.
- A link to take the test again appears when the test is re-opened.
- Your instructor determines whether one or more of the test attempt scores are recorded in the Grade Center.

Question Completion Status

The question completion status indicator provides an up-to-date look at complete or incomplete questions in a test.

The status of which questions have been answered is displayed at the top of the page. Click the chevron next to the question completion status to collapse or expand it.
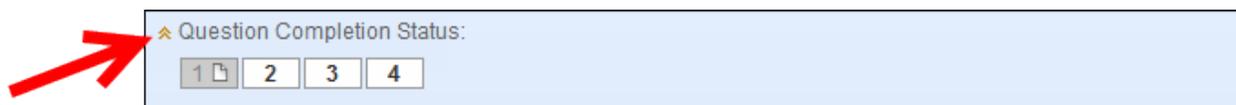
- When you answer a question and move to the next question in a question-by-question test, the status box is edited on the next page to show that the previous question was answered.
- If you do not answer a question and move on to the next page in a question-by-question test the status box will show on the next page that the previous question was not answered.
- Navigate between questions by clicking on the question number in the status indicator.

When you take an all-at-once test (a test where the questions all appear on the same page), click **Save Answer** to save a specific question without scrolling to the bottom of the page to save. Saving either a single question or all of the questions that have been answered (with the **Save All Answers** at the top or bottom of the page) changes the status indicator to show which questions have been completed.

Test Submissions and Grades

You can access your test grades and if allowed, your test submission from My Grades. Select the My Grades tool from the Course Menu or from Tools.

For more information regarding test submissions and grading, visit the Student Help pages at http://students.wtamu.edu/wtclass/tests.html

My Grades (Student Gradebook)

The My Grades page shows the status of gradable items, such as tests, assignments, journal and blog entries, and discussion posts.

The My Grades page may include item names, details, due dates, student and instructor dates of activity, posted grades, points possible, links to rubrics used for grading, and your instructor's comments about the items.
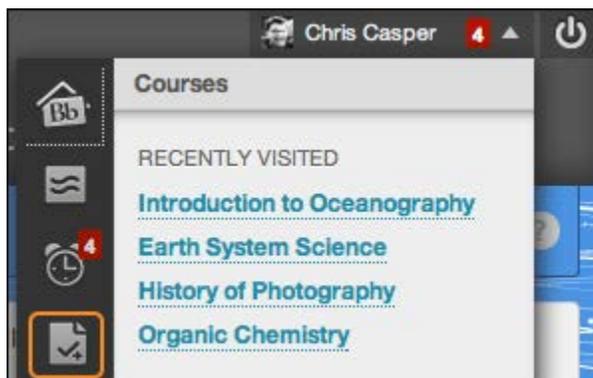
Access My Grades

Your instructor and institution control which tools are available. If this tool is not available, your instructor or institution may have disabled it.

1. On the course menu, click **Tools** or a customized **My Grades** link.
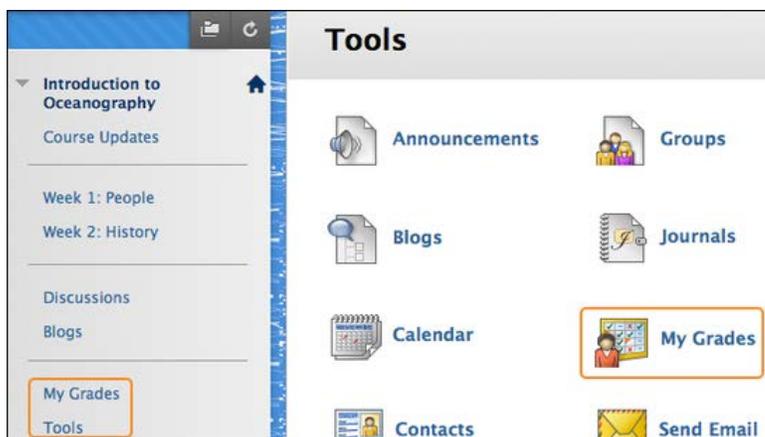
-OR-

From the My Blackboard menu, click the **My Grades** icon.

The My Grades page appears.

View Grade Details

If you access **My Grades** from the My Institution tab or the My Blackboard menu, you see grades for all courses. Click **View Attempt** to view the grade details.

If you access My Grades inside a course, you see the grades for that course only. Click the item name to view the grade details.

Grades for each course are viewed in the order of:

- Overall grade for the course
- Calculated grades, such as running total
- Graded items by date
- Submitted items by date
- In progress items
- Upcoming items ordered by due date

If there is no due date, upcoming items are in alpha order.

If your assignment has not been graded, the Grade column contains a symbol indicating its status. If your assignment has been submitted and graded, the grade appears in the Grade column. To view more details, click the link to see the assignment's Review Submission History page. This page includes:

- Instructor Feedback: This section lists your grade and any feedback provided by your instructor.
- Attached Files: This section provides links to open or download any files attached by you or your instructor. For example, your instructor might provide comments in a file that you submitted with your assignment.

    If you see feedback for an item but do not see a grade, contact your instructor.

My Grade Item Status

The following table describes the symbols appearing on the My Grades page.

Symbol	Description
-	Item has not been completed. No information is available.
✅	Item is completed, but will not have a grade (for items such as surveys).
⚠	Item has been submitted. This item is waiting to be reviewed by your instructor. -OR- Item has been submitted. Your instructor may review this item, but may not be provided a grade.
Grade	Item has been graded. Click the grade to view detailed feedback.
🕐	Attempt is in progress. This item has not been submitted. To submit the item, see Submitting a Draft Assignment.
⬤	Grade is exempted for this user. If you do not complete this assignment, it will not affect your grade.
❗	Error has occurred. Contact your instructor.

Technical Support

Contact the IT Service Center by phone at 806-651-HELP (4357) and support personnel will be happy to assist you. Phone support is generally available from 7:00am until 9:00pm. Check the IT Service Center's webpage for current hours.

Please have your Buff ID number and any additional information ready for the IT Service Center representative. This information may include information about the course ID, type of computer you are using, or where you are located on campus.

Online Help

More information for using the various tools in WTClass/Blackboard can be found within the Student Help pages at http://students.wtamu.edu/wtclass/index.html.