

Blackboard is a great tool for enhancing learning for both face-to-face and online classes and this quick handout will help you to use it effectively.

This handout has five main sections.

1. **Getting Access to Blackboard** - getting an account and logging in for the first time.
2. **Navigation** - my courses and course view.
3. **Frequently Used Tools** - working with Assignments, accessing Course Content, using the Discussion Board, sending email to instructors or classmates, taking Tests and Surveys, and accessing grades.
4. **My Grades** – accessing your grades and progress for your course(s).
5. **Common Problems** - course availability, receiving email, and downloading documents.

1. Getting Access to Blackboard

Getting an Account

All academic members of the MCC community (instructors and students) receive Blackboard access automatically. No special request is needed to log into Blackboard.

Logging In

Go to www.muskegoncc.edu and log in using your MCC ID and password. Click on MyMCC. If you do not know your MCC ID or forgot your password, you will need to contact the help desk at 1-866-718-5170.

You will see all courses for which you are registered in the My Blackboard Courses in the center section of the page. If you do not see a course in which you are enrolled, please verify that you are enrolled in the course, and then contact your instructor to ensure they are using Blackboard and have made the course visible to students. Although a Blackboard course is automatically created for all enrolled courses, not all instructors choose to use it.

2. Navigation

My Courses

My Courses is an area that gives easy access to all of the Blackboard courses in which you are enrolled. Once you are logged in, *My Courses* will appear in the center of your screen. Simply click on the link of the course you wish to enter.

Course View

While your instructor can choose any page of the course to be the home page, you will frequently see the *Announcements* page upon entering the course site. If your instructor does not email these announcements to the class, you should check this page frequently to ensure that you are up-to-date on class activities.

Although instructors may customize their Blackboard course menu and content, here are some of the frequently used links you may see in your courses:

- **Syllabus** - look here for your official course syllabus.
- **Course Information** - additional general information about the course.
- **Course Content, Course Documents, or Course Resources** - often used to distribute course materials.

- **Assignments** - instructions and assignment drop boxes.
- **Discussions or Discussion Board** - discussion forums.
- **Groups** - may appear if the groups or teams are part of the course, or to divide a large roster into smaller sections.
- **My Grades** - student gradebook.
- **Tools** - a list of additional Blackboard features that your instructor has made available to you.

3. Frequently Used Tools

In each of your courses, there will be a link titled "Tools." From this link you can access all the available tools, including those listed below. For some of these tools, it will not be necessary to access the Tools menu each time, as your instructor will provide links to those which will be required most frequently.

Assignments

Assignments is a *Course Tool* within Blackboard that allows Instructors to distribute assignments, and receive and grade students' completed work via online submission. Assignments can have associated files, possible points, and due dates. Make sure to read and follow all instructions your instructor has given you before you complete the assignment. Certain types of assignments can be difficult to resubmit if you make a mistake.

To submit an assignment, click on the link with the title of the assignment. You will be shown the Assignment Information, which includes the title, instructions, due date, and points possible. You may either type your submission in the box or attach a document you have already created for this assignment.

It is generally recommended that you work offline and attach a file. If you lose internet connection, refresh the page, accidentally close the page, or experience any other interruption of your work while you are typing, you can lose all the content you have entered in the text editor.

Course Content

The *Course Content* section, also sometimes called *Course Documents* or *Course Resources*, typically contains files your instructor has uploaded that will be important in the class. Examples include a syllabus, schedule, course outline, readings, slides, videos, assignments, rubrics, lecture notes, or links to other websites or resources.

Discussion Board

The *Discussion Board* is a *Course Tool* within Blackboard used to promote interaction and sharing of ideas within a course. Forums can be used for formal course-related discussion, questions or comments, or casual conversation. Discussion board forums may be graded or ungraded and each forum may contain one or more topics, each of which is called a thread.

Send Email

The *Send Email* tool is useful when you want to send an email to a classmate, TA, or instructor, but do not know the person's email address. To access this tool, click on the *Email* link if your instructor has provided one. If there is no such link, simply click on the *Tools* link and scroll down to find the *Send Email* link.

Note: Blackboard will not save a copy of any email you send. It will, however, send a copy to the primary email address you have listed in your account. It is recommended that you save this copy for your records.

Tests and Surveys

Your instructor may require that you take an online test or survey through Blackboard. Though you may not have taken an online assessment before, the process is generally straightforward and easy to navigate. However, you should be aware that test styles may differ within a course, or between instructors. For example, assessments may:

- Be untimed, timed but allow you to go over time for a penalty, or timed and set to automatically close when the clock runs out.
- Show all questions at once or one question at a time.
- Allow you to skip around, or force you to answer questions in the order they appear.
- Have questions in a variety of formats, including multiple choice, fill-in the blank, matching, short answer, essay, or other.
- Have questions that allow partial credit.
- Be automatically graded by Blackboard, or require manual grading by your instructor, or a combination of both.

Before you take an assessment, make sure you've read all the instructions provided to you by your instructor and asked them any questions you may have about the assessment itself. You can also read these tips and instructions in order to avoid some common pitfalls.

4. My Grades

If your instructor posts grades online, the My Grades link will show your progress in the course (sometimes a link will be available, but no grades will appear because the instructor uses a traditional gradebook). This information is available only to you and your instructor, unless you choose to show it to someone else.

In this tool, you can view assignment titles, points possible, and your score, as well as extra information regarding dates, times, and feedback the grader may have left on the assignment. If you believe a grade is incorrect, please contact your instructor as quickly as possible-- what you see is what you get. You are responsible for informing your instructor of any discrepancies, errors, typos, etc.

5. Common Problems**I can't see my class!**

Contact your instructor. He or she may not have made the course available yet, or you may not be enrolled in the class. If you are not yet enrolled or are on the waitlist for your course, you will not be able to view the Blackboard course. Once you are officially enrolled, you should be able to view the course on Blackboard within 24 hours. However, if you are officially enrolled and the instructor has made the course available but you are still unable to see it, contact the Help Desk at 1-866-718-5170.

My instructor says I should check my e-mail but I did not get anything!

Instructors may purposefully send emails through Blackboard to share announcements and other information. Students may also choose to have automatic notifications sent to them when announcements, grades, or other content items are posted in a course, or when assignments or assessments are due.

If you are not receiving emails sent through Blackboard, you can check the email address that is associated with your Blackboard account. You can find this information on your Blackboard home page by clicking the *'Update*

Email' link. Verify the email address listed for your account. This information is automatically provided to Blackboard, so if it's incorrect, enter your MCC Student Email address and press '*Submit*'.

If the email address is valid, check your email spam folder.

How do I download files my instructor has posted on Blackboard?

Depending on the type of file, it will usually be on the Course Content/Documents/Resources, Course Information, or Assignments page. Click on the file name. If it does not begin downloading, right-click on the link to manually download the file to your computer. The download option may be listed as "*Save Link As*," "*Save Target As*," or "*Download file*," depending on your browser.

I'm having trouble accessing a PDF, audio, or video file, or I'm missing a plug-in!

Different browsers handle PDF and embedded multimedia files in different ways. Some will use a plug-in to display the file in the browser window, while others will automatically download the file to your computer.

If you are prompted to install a plug-in, try that first. If that fails, try right-clicking on the link to the file to see if you can download the file to your computer. The download option may be listed as "Save Link As," "Save Target As," or "Download file," depending on your browser. If it downloads, you can then open the file using a PDF reader or multimedia viewing program.

If the embedded file is actually hosted on another website, such as YouTube, try opening the file in a new browser window or going directly to the other website to view the content there.

If you still cannot display or download the file, try switching to another browser, such as Firefox, or Chrome. Chances are good that at least one of these browsers will allow you to access the content. If this fails, contact your instructor. If other students are having the same problem, the issue may be with the file, not your browser!

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