

This document is designed to help develop an institutional common language regarding instructional design choices; it refers to blended course development, but for most technology integration projects the issues are the same. If you work with an instructional designer to develop a blended course, he or she will provide the expertise about the best use of Blackboard tools as well as third-party tools such as VoiceThread. If you are working on a technology integration project, your training coordinator and the Academic Computing Department of IRM will support these same principles.

When designing online course components, an instructional designer's main priorities (and yours also) are to:

1. Determine what your students will create to demonstrate their learning growth—and which collaborative tools they will use to share it with others;
2. Determine the appropriate pace and sequence of learning activities; and
3. Improve course navigation within known constraints.

All design decisions flow from these three priorities. This document will focus on the third priority (navigation) and the first (choosing the correct tool).

Navigation

Blackboard offers a seemingly limitless number of choices to the course builder. An instructional designer will make choices whenever possible that align with these overall goals for improving learners' experience in Blackboard:

- Fewer clicks
- Helping learners to understand where they are and to not get lost
- Helping learners to understand the structure of your course and course week
- Helping learners to understand your assignment expectations
- Reducing learners' extraneous cognitive load.

In particular, he or she will follow these guidelines regarding instructions for graded activities and assignments:

1. **If your instructions are very brief** (1-2 short paragraphs):
 - Use the text editor (VTBE) to put them in the top level of the Assignment form or other Bb learning object. (The top level is what shows in your weekly folder.)



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- Click for an [example of top-only assignment instructions](#), taken from two different weeks of a Media Arts course.
 - **Advantages:**
 - Learners can find out what they need to do without any extra clicks or file downloads.
 - In general, limiting top level information to about this length allows learners to see the structure of your entire week—like a table of contents.
 - **A note about journals and blogs:** When a student clicks on Create Entry inside a Bb Journal or Blog, the instructions disappear. You will either need to put your instructions in a PDF so they can have access to them while they are responding, or coach them to create their journal or blog entry in a new browser tab or window.
2. **If your instructions are longer, but you do NOT expect students to submit a file:**
- Save your instructions to PDF and attach/link to them from the Assignment form or other Bb learning object.
 - Do not attach or link to a Word doc if you are not expecting students to return it. This sends a mixed message!
 - **Advantage:** This is the preferred method if your instructions are lengthy but what you expect from students is brief. For example:
 - If you only want students to write in the comments section of a Bb Assignment form; or
 - If the main work of the assignment is completed in a VoiceThread, and you only want students to reflect in the comments section of the assignment form, or to notify you that they are done; or
 - If you only want students to upload a screenshot documenting that they have completed a learning activity at an external site, and perhaps to reflect on that activity.
 - **PDFs are also useful for Journal or Blog assignments**, as noted in #1 above.
3. **If you expect students to create or alter a file and submit it** (Word, Excel, Sketchpad, Finale Notepad, fillable PDF form, etc.):
- The Assignment form is the preferred Bb tool as it is the most efficient way for you to write feedback on the file submitted and return it to the student, if needed.
 - Attach or link to the file from the Bb Assignment form—or instruct students to create a new file on their own.
 - **Advantages:**
 - A file signals to learners that they should save it, do something with it and upload it for feedback and/or grading.
 - Learners are working with the software applications that are germane to your academic field.



- You can provide graphic organizers such as tables to help learners organize their work.
- **Exception:** In some cases (for example in math or music) you may want to give students a file only to manipulate it but not to submit their changes.

Additional navigational reminders:

- Link to or list resources at/near the point where they will be used.
- Links to documents should be set to open in a new tab or window and should include the following information:
 - The title or description of the file that will be opening (not the word ‘here’)
 - Notice of what format the file is in so the student knows where to look for it on his/her computer (Word, PDF, GSP, etc.)
- For course documents, use the standardized header and footer used on this document. Your instructional designer can provide you with a template.
- Whenever possible, embed media such as YouTube videos or VoiceThreads. For copyright reasons, you will need to link to rather than embed some media resources.
- Use images judiciously to help learners remember where they are and to reinforce learning through multiple modalities.
- Use ALT text to describe any image uploaded to Blackboard. ALT text provides alternate information for non-visual users—not the file title. Keep it to fewer than 50 characters and describe just the image, not its purpose. You can also include brief source information. (A good rule-of-thumb is to imagine reading your text over the telephone. What words would you use when you got to the image?)
- The instructor / course developer is responsible for broken links to outside resources—for example, when another institution rebuilds its website. Check your links each time you teach the course, and correct them if needed.
- For those who are comfortable using HTML, you can move content from one item to another **within a course**, by copy/pasting code. **Use extreme caution before code between courses!** Any links to documents uploaded to Blackboard are course-specific. The link in the destination course may look fine to you, but from the student view it will be broken.
- To reduce extraneous cognitive load, procedural instructions should be written at about an eighth grade level. You want students to be challenged by the college-level texts of your discipline, not by your instructions!

For further information, the organization Web Accessibility in Mind (WebAIM) has more [information and resources](#) regarding design principles for online accessibility.



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Which tool do I use?

In the online environment, it's tempting to focus on using technology to deliver content. An important aim of instructional design is to shift the focus to:

- what we want students to create to demonstrate their learning growth;
- how they will share it with you and their peers; and
- how we can facilitate this using the tools of the Blackboard learning management system and selected third-party tools such as VoiceThread.

Although the choices are seemingly limitless, deciding what you want for your students is an important first step.

Next remember the basic purpose of each tool:

- **Blackboard Assignments**—for any time that you want students to alter a document or file and give it back to you, to attach a file that they have created, or to make a very few comments that don't need follow up.
- **Blackboard Blogs**—for student-student interactions, especially ones in which a flat rather than threaded or nesting structure works well. The Bb Blog tool makes it easy to see all responses by scrolling, is also accessible with few clicks, and makes giving grades and feedback much easier for the instructor. However, if you are grading peer response you may want to consider the Blackboard Discussions. A good blog or discussion starts with a good open-ended prompt.
- **Blackboard Discussions**—for student-student interactions that require a threaded or nesting structure. The Bb Discussion tool makes it easy to see the structure of an ongoing conversation—that is, who responded to whom.
- **Blackboard Journals**—for private student-teacher conversations including reflective writing and reinforcement of important concepts.
- **Blackboard Wikis**—for collaborative work. This may include each student making a contribution to or open editing of a shared product.
- **Blackboard Tests**—for auto-graded comprehension checks or step-by-step tutorials with student responses,
- **VoiceThread**—for online lecture-discussions; oral conversations; or presenting and responding to images. VoiceThread achieves a better integration of content delivery and interaction than any of the Blackboard tools, but is **currently available for blended courses and a few exceptional cases only**.



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Please see the tables below for more details. Some of the information below may be more relevant to an instructional designer than to you. The first row in the table is exceptional in that it focuses on content delivery--specifically on using SlideShare to post copyrighted PowerPoint presentations in your course without violating publishers' licenses.

If you want students to:	For example:	Use this Bb tool (and some tips about using it):	How you get (and change) a grading column?
View publishers' PowerPoint presentations without violating copyright laws.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When an instructor adopts a textbook, the publisher may make slides available to the instructor for classroom use only. 	<p>SLIDESHARE with enhanced privacy settings (please check with your instructional designer or with Academic Computing).</p> <p><i>Students will:</i> view the slides without being able to download, print or share them.</p>	N/A
Alter a file—for example in Word, Sketchpad, Excel, Finale NotePad, etc.—and to share it only with you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to questions or working with a model that you provide Filling in a table or other graphic organizer 	<p>ASSIGNMENT Create assessment > Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Students will:</i> open document that you provide, make changes, save, and use the Browse feature to re-upload the doc to the assignment form. 	<p>Bb automatically creates a grade column when you create an assignment.</p> <p>You can decide whether or not to make the assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available to students Worth points (and how many)



If you want students to:	For example:	Use this Bb tool (and some tips about using it):	How you get (and change) a grading column?
<p>Create a file—for example in Word, Sketchpad, Excel, Finale NotePad, etc.—and to share it only with you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uploading an original essay or project 	<p>ASSIGNMENT Create Assessment > Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Students will:</i> use the Browse feature to upload their files to the assignment form. <p>Note: Summative assessments must be submitted through a Turnitin Assignment form.</p>	<p>When you change an assignment title, the change propagates to the Grade Center (and the student’s My Progress/My Grades) page.</p>
<p>Write a brief paragraph or two—shared only with you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding briefly to one or more prompts when you don’t expect to give much feedback or to get much revision. • Notifying you that they have completed some group work or other activity that won’t be flagged in your GradeCenter. 	<p>ASSIGNMENT Create Assessment > Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Students will:</i> write their submission directly in the text box located in the assignment form. 	



<p>Share their writing or other work (audio, visual, etc.) with their peers.</p> <p>Interact socially.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchanging information about their background and interests. • Brainstorming on a topic. • Sharing opinions on a controversial topic. • Responding to assigned readings, and to one another. • Solving a problem and posting a new problem for the next person to solve. • Sharing one’s progress on a project—and offering feedback and resources to peers. • Sharing their own work and responding to one another’s work. 	<p>BLOG Add Interactive Tool > Blog > Create New Blog – OR – Control Panel > Class Tools > Blogs > Create New Blog</p> <p>DISCUSSION Discussion + Add Interactive Tool > Discussion Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Students will:</i> respond to prompts and can comment on other student or instructor responses. • Both the Blog and the Discussion support cognitive and social presence simultaneously. • Students and you can add a variety of visual media. • The structure of the blog is very flat so students can see more with fewer clicks. (Be sure to select monthly rather than weekly indexing so that blog postings are more accessible for a longer period.) • IMPORTANT: The default setting for a blog is Individual. Be sure to change it to Class when you first set up the blog. This is something that cannot be edited later, so if you make a mistake you’ll need to delete your blog and create a new one. • The Bb Discussion tool is preferable for highly structured branching conversations where it is important to keep track of who has responded to whom. Students and you can choose Collect to read avoid opening separate posts. <p>NOTE: <i>If you use Blogs or Discussions a lot, you can add a new link to the course menu so they’re easier for students to find.</i></p>	<p>You can choose whether a blog is graded, its point value, and how often you want to be flagged if a student responds (it works best to choose one time). Change the title of the grade column by changing the blog title in the back end. Also change the class link (where deployed) to match.</p> <p>You can choose whether to grade the entire discussion forum or individual threads. It is easier to manage threads. Change the title of the grade column by changing the title of the thread in the back end.</p>
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<p>Write reflectively—for your eyes only.</p> <p>Conduct an ongoing conversation with you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflecting on one’s progress while completing a longer project.• Academic writing in response to one or more prompts—where you expect a lot of feedback or one-on-one conversation to build toward understanding concepts.	<p>JOURNAL Control Panel > Class Tools > Journals > Create Journal –OR- Add Interactive Tool > Journal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Students will:</i> create entries within each journal (unlimited).• You can make one journal for ongoing reflection throughout a course or separate thematic journals. Each journal you create (the prompt) is visible to all course members.• Student responses are visible only to you by default. Please do not change this! (Use the Blog tool if you want student-student-interaction).• When you can create Journals, you can include attachments, embedded images and media, etc. Students can do the same in their original post.• You and the student can comment on each entry. Comments are text box only (there are no tools to attach documents or embed media)—however, HTML formatting, including links to outside web pages, does work. <p>NOTE: <i>If you use Journals a lot, you can add a new link to the course menu so they’re easier for students to find.</i></p>	<p>Journals function exactly like the blog, except they are private (between teacher and student) by default. Please see blog instructions above.</p>
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<p>Collaboratively building shared knowledge or writing,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembling information on different topics or from different sources • Commenting on a text within the body of the text • Creating and revising a collaborative story, essay or other project 	<p>WIKI Control Panel > Class Tools > Wikis > Create Wiki –OR- Add Interactive Tool > Wiki</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Students will:</i> create content, edit one another’s content, and use the Comment feature to discuss process. • Pages sort alphabetically so you may want to create a numbering system or thematic titles. • Participation summary and version history allows you to track who contributed what. • IMPORTANT: When the course is copied, only the wiki instructions are copied. Any pages that you have created is considered user content and will be deleted. <p><i>NOTE: If you want students to make repeated trips to one or more wikis, you can add a new link to the course menu so they’re easier for students to find.</i></p>	<p>A grading column is automatically created when you assign points to a wiki.</p> <p>Change the column title by changing the wiki title in the back end.</p>
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<p>Respond to auto-graded or teacher-graded questions for testing or for direct instruction (tutorials).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing material and checking comprehension. • Learning new information with instructor control over the timing and delivery 	<p>TEST Control Panel > Course Tools (save deployment for later)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Students will:</i> access the test and follow the instructions, order, and pacing of the test. • You can create your test one question at a time or upload the questions all at once in a preformatted .txt file. • It is highly recommended that you wait to deploy your test. Once it is deployed it is more difficult to edit (you may need to export, import, edit, and deploy the new one). • It's recommended that you not mix auto-graded and essay-style questions on the same test, as students will receive no feedback until you have manually responded. 	<p>The grade column is automatically created when the test is deployed.</p> <p>To change the title of a test:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go back into the test tool (back end)—or go to the point of deployment and choose “Edit the Test.” 2. Also choose “Edit the Test Options” so that the title in your course matches the title that students see on My Progress/My Grades.
<p>Interact orally, in writing, or by doodling in response to images and/or videos and/or an audio recording.</p> <p>Create rich audio-visual presentations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asynchronous commenting in response to graphics, questions and other prompts. • Oral discussion and/or assessment. • Oral presentations. 	<p>VoiceThread</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Students will:</i> respond to questions, prompts, or other students using voice or text in Voice Threads you create. • <i>Students will:</i> Share information by creating portfolios and presentations of their own that include voice, text, or other media. <p>NOTES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>VoiceThread is currently available for blended courses and a few exceptional cases only.</i> • <i>VoiceThread is integrated with Blackboard so that students are automatically logged in. See an instructional designer or Academic Computing for details.</i> 	<p>When you set up a VT assignment in Bb, a grading column is automatically created--however, new contributions will not be flagged in the GradeCenter. Enter the assignment itself to access the VT grading interface.</p> <p>When your course is copied, the web link to VoiceThread and the GradeCenter column is copied, but the assignment will need to be rebuilt.</p>





Week 3: Your Own Leading Lines Photographs

In this assignment I want you to look in your environment for imagery that can make use of leading lines. Please be sure that you have completely studied all of the web pages and video examples linked to this week.

When you are ready, go out and find leading lines in your home, community, or environment. Photograph several images that use leading lines. Submit your two best images that strongly represent the use of leading lines by uploading them to your VoiceThread portfolio. Include the link to your VoiceThread in the comments section of this assignment form and submit.



Week 4: How Depth of Field Affects and Positive and Negative Space

Instructions: First review the entire video linked to below. When you are ready, answer the essential question in **at least two well-developed paragraphs**. Protect your time by working offline and copy/pasting your answer into the comments section of this assignment form.

Essential Question: What is depth of field and how do photographers use it?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUYuUs1aaCU>

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