









## Blackboard Course Tools – A Quick Guide for Students

















This handout is a general guide to the Course Tools you'll most likely encounter in your online and hybrid courses at SIPI. We use Blackboard CE 6.0 (formerly WebCT).

- For more detailed information on each tool, log in to your Blackboard course, click on any course tool, and then click the Help menu link. (You must be enrolled in an online course to log in.)
- Critical tools to master are marked with a STAR ★ – your grade may depend on knowing how to use these tools! Practice using them, and ask for help if you're not confident with them.
- **NOTE:** Tools used will vary from course to course. Different instructors emphasize different course tools. Also, you may have an online textbook outside the Blackboard course, or other components unique to your course.

Course Tool	Description
 <b>Course Content</b>	<p>Instructors present a variety of content on this page, such as folders for organizing the course materials, weekly assignments, links to other course tools, course requirements and other resources.</p> <p>You can access the <b>Course Content</b> tool from the <b>Home Page</b> screen, or, if available, from the Course Content Map.</p>
 <b>Announcements</b>	<p><b>Announcements</b> are course-wide notices sent by instructors or their helpers. They appear in your My Blackboard page, on the Announcements screen, or they can appear as a <b>pop-up message</b> when you log into your course.</p> <p>Announcements usually include important information pertaining to your course, such as assignment due date reminders, or changes to the course schedule.</p>
 <b>Assessments</b>	<p>★ The <b>Assessments</b> tool is used to deliver online tests. There are three types of assessments, with many possible settings selected by your instructor. Some assessments are only available on certain dates, and you might have a set time limit within which to complete the test. You might see all the test questions at once, or you might see the questions delivered one at a time.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Quizzes</b> – Your online quizzes are scored and recorded. You may be able to take a quiz more than once, depending on the test settings. You may receive your grade immediately, or you may have to wait until the score is released by your instructor.</li> <li>2. <b>Self-Tests</b> – Self-tests are online tests for which you receive grades and feedback. However, your grades are not recorded and they do not count toward your final course grade. Self-tests give you the opportunity to test your knowledge and understanding of course content. Self-tests are not saved after you have viewed your results, but you can print them out.</li> <li>3. <b>Surveys</b> -- Surveys are anonymous and are not graded. However, your instructor can see which students have completed the survey. Instructors use surveys to gather student opinions. At SIPI, surveys are also used to find out about the technology skills of online students, and to conduct course and instructor evaluations at the end of the trimester.</li> </ol>
 <b>Assignments</b>	<p>★ The <b>Assignments</b> tool is used to view, complete, submit (upload), and publish assignments. If a new assignment has been added to your course, an icon appears next to the link in the Course Menu.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Some instructors will require you to email the assignment to them,</p>

	<p><i>rather than upload it with the Assignments tool.</i></p> <p>There are two types of assignments, <i>Text</i> and <i>Web Site</i>. At SIPI, <i>Web Site</i> assignments are rarely used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Text Assignment:</b> You can enter text into the Assignments tool screen, attach a file, or do both. However, if your assignment requires a large amount of typed text, or if you want to include other materials such as images, it is better to attach a file.</li> </ul> <p>Each assignment has a due date. If your instructor allows submissions after the due date, they are marked <i>late</i>. Otherwise, late assignments are marked <i>missed</i>.</p> <p>After you upload an assignment, you can either save it as a draft or submit it for grading. Your instructor will mark the assignment as <i>complete</i>, and, often, provide feedback to you about it.</p> <p>In some courses, the instructor (or the student) can <i>publish</i> their assignment. Published assignments are visible to everyone in the course.</p>
 <b>Calendar</b>	<p><b>Calendar</b> allows students to view and (depending on the course settings) to create dated reminders about events such as holidays or assignment due dates.</p> <p>Entries can be viewed and printed by the day, week or month. Depending on the course settings, new Calendar entries may show up as pop-up windows when you log in to your course.</p> <p>You can access the Calendar from the My Blackboard screen or from the Course Tools menu within a course.</p>
 <b>Chat</b>	<p>The <b>Chat</b> tool allows you to communicate in real time with other people in your course, with all users or selected users. You can also use the Chat tool's <b>Whiteboard</b> to draw objects, enter text, and import images that can be viewed in real time by other users.</p> <p>Your instructor can create Chat rooms, Whiteboard rooms, or combined Chat and Whiteboard rooms.</p> <p>Once inside a Chat or Whiteboard room, you can raise your hand, view conversation logs, send messages and links to other chat participants, and, in a Whiteboard room, draw on the board, print what's on the board, and save Whiteboard drawings as files.</p> <p>Generally, Chat and Whiteboard sessions are <i>recorded</i> by the instructor.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> <i>Not all instructors at SIPI use the Chat Tool. If not, you won't see it in your Course Tools menu.</i></p>
 <b>Discussions</b>	<p> With the <b>Discussions</b> tool you can post messages to your instructor and other students, on a variety of course-related topics, and receive replies from them.</p> <p>Your instructor usually sets up topic folders to house discussions. Folders may be available to the entire group, or to just a few members. For example, if you are assigned a group project, your instructor may set up a folder for you to discuss your project privately with your group.</p> <p>There are three types of discussions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Threaded:</b> A traditional online "bulletin board" where you can post and reply to messages. Replies that are associated with the same post are grouped together, creating message <i>threads</i>.</li> </ol>

	<p>2. <b>Class blog:</b> (Blog = <i>web log</i>) A collaborative space, where you and your classmates can post dated entries on a particular topic. You can then add comments to any blog entry.</p> <p>3. <b>Journal:</b> A place for your own writing, the journals can be kept private between you and your instructor or shared with the class. For example, your instructor may require you to write a weekly reflective paragraph about the course that is not shared with your classmates. Or your instructor may require you to journal responses to a reading assignment, where your opinions are visible to the entire group.</p> <p>Depending on settings, within the topics created for your course, you can read, post, and reply to discussion messages. You can also compile selected messages and save them as a file and/or print them.</p>
 Goals	<p>The <b>Goals</b> tool shows the learning objectives for your course. Not all instructors at SIPI use this tool because learning objectives are also listed in the course Syllabus.</p> <p>Students can view the goals for a course, and depending on the course settings, you may also view files and course content, such as assessments and assignments that are associated with a goal.</p>
 Learning Modules	<p> <b>Learning Modules</b> contain course content grouped together in a specified learning path. For example, a learning module might be named Week 3, and contain all the course materials for the week, such as an introduction, lecture notes, readings, and links to tests and discussions. Or, a learning module might be created on a certain course topic and contain all course materials related to that topic, such as “lab safety” or “chemical elements.”</p> <p>When you work with a learning module, you can navigate the content by using the Table of Contents or Action Menu:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the <b>Table of Contents</b> is set to display, it appears as either a window to the left of the learning module, or as the first page of the learning module. Navigate the learning module by clicking links in the table of contents.</li> <li>• If the <b>Action Menu</b> is set to display, it appears above the learning module in the form of clickable links. Navigate the learning module by clicking the navigation buttons in the Action Menu.</li> </ul>
 Mail	<p> Every participant in a Blackboard course can communicate with other users in that course via the <b>Mail</b> tool, accessible within the course. If you are enrolled in more than one Blackboard course, you’ll have separate email access for each course. Only course participants can email each other.</p> <p>Mail allows you to communicate with each through text correspondence. You can also include attachments (up to 3MB). You can create new messages, send messages, read, reply to, and forward messages.</p> <p>You can also delete, print, copy and move messages from one folder to another. For additional mail options, click the Mail tool in your course, and then click Help.</p> <p>You can also have your Blackboard mail forwarded to an external email account. This is handy if you want to be notified when you have new course mail.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Some SIPI instructors require you to submit assignments or ask for course help via Blackboard Mail. However, some instructors use the <b>Assignment Tool</b> or expect you to contact them through an external email</p>

	<i>address. Find out which your instructor requires.</i>
 Media Library	The <b>Media Library</b> contains a database of documents, videos, audio files and images related to your course. Generally your instructor uploads those files, although in some courses, students can add files to the Media Library. The files in the Media Library are generally also linked within the course's Learning Modules.
 Roster	<p>The <b>Roster</b> Tool allows you to view the profiles of other course participants. By default, the Instructor tab is selected. To view profiles of students in your course, click the Students tab. If your instructor has set up special working groups within the course, you can also view course participants according to the groups they are in.</p> <p>You can Edit your profile and add a photograph, your birthday and other personal information, if you wish.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> <i>Each registered Blackboard user has one profile that is visible on all their courses.</i></p>
 Search	<p>The <b>Search</b> tool allows you to find information within the course. You must enter "keywords," to find the information. Search results matching your keywords are displayed. Each result contains a link to the information in the course.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> <i>The Search tool will not find information within uploaded documents such as PowerPoint, Word or Acrobat PDF files.</i></p>
 Syllabus	The <b>Syllabus</b> contains information about the course such as prerequisites, grading policies, instructor contact hours, required textbooks, and the learning goals of the course. In addition, the syllabus may also contain instructor policies regarding late assignments, plagiarism, and their expectations of students. Students should print the syllabus and keep a copy for their records.
 Web Links	<b>Web Links</b> are clickable hyperlinks to online course materials, such as your online textbook, reference pages, or writing guides. In some courses, students can add web links for the class to use.
 Who's Online	<p>The <b>Who's Online</b> tool shows which users are currently logged into SIPI's Blackboard environment.</p> <p>User can send chat invitations to other users who are online, and then type text messages to each other in real time.</p> <p>This tool is similar to the Chat tool, except that with Chat, users can only chat within a single course.</p>
 My Grades	The <b>My Grades</b> screen displays all released grades for your course. Depending on the course settings, you may see a column of Grades, Grading Forms, Statistics, and/or Comments from your instructor.
 My Progress	<p>The <b>My Progress</b> tool displays a report that includes information about your participation in the course.</p> <p>The report shows which course pages you visited and when, how many discussion postings you made or read, how much time you have spent in the course, and other information your instructor may calculate into your grade.</p>
 Notes	Within the <b>Notes</b> tool, you can create General or Learning Module notes to use as a reminder or study aid. Notes are private and cannot be viewed by other members of the course. You can add, edit, print and delete notes.