Navigating a Blackboard Course

You can navigate through a Blackboard course by using:

- Course Menu
- Breadcrumbs
- Links in a Content Area

The Course Menu appears on the left side of a course and contains links to materials and tools within the course. The instructor can customize the style of the Course Menu and the content and tools available to you. Therefore, course menus may vary from course to course.

The following course menu links are some of the course functions you might be able to access from the course menu:

- **Homepage** – A link that returns you to Course Home Page or the customized page your instructor provided. This area may include notification modules such as Announcements.
- **Start Here** – An area used to introduce you to the course.
- **Syllabus** – A full description of the course requirements.
- **Content** – This area is where the majority of the content can be located (i.e., course assignments, activities, discussion forums, tests/quizzes, essays, and other activities).
- **My Grades** – A link to your course grades.
- **Email** – A tool to send messages from Blackboard to the user’s email address listed in SAIL, but messages will not be received in Blackboard.
- **Bb Messages** – A tool to send messages within the Blackboard system that will be received in Blackboard.
- **Discussion Forum** – A forum that is made up of individual discussion threads that can be organized around a particular subject. You may see this area referred to as the Discussion Board or Discussion Forum.
- **Groups** – A tool that may be used for working on collaborative projects. The instructor sets up groups.
- **Chat** – A tool for communicating in real time similar to the texting feature on a cell phone.
- **Blogs** – A tool used for sharing and commenting on information, thoughts, and ideas. Blogs can be shared with groups or all students.
- **Journals** – A tool for personal reflection that is only seen by the instructor.
- **Bell Library** – A link to Bell Library resources.
- **Ask a Librarian** – A link to access help with the library.
- **Student Services A-Z** – A link to student services at TAMUCC.
- **Accessibility** – Resources on accessibility+.
- **Bb Help** – A link to Blackboard Web Help searchable topics and step-by-step instructions.
- **Bb Video Tutorials** – A link to Blackboard video tutorials to help with Blackboard.
Breadcrumbs are another way to navigate in a Blackboard course. The breadcrumb trail is located directly below the My Island Online and Courses tab.

Breadcrumbs are created as you access different sections of the course and allow you to quickly return to a previously visited location.

Please remember not to use the “back” button in your browser’s toolbar and use the breadcrumbs instead.

A Content Area is located in a content frame displayed to the right of the Course Menu. When you click a link on the course menu, it takes you to the specific content area, tool, or material.

Content areas may contain links that navigate to parts of the course or to an activity such as a discussion forum or test. The image below shows a link to a test. Notice that links are underlined headings in a Blackboard Content Area.

![Taking a Test in Blackboard]

**Test Taking Tips**

**Before starting the test:**
- Disable all pop-up blockers. Set them to allow Blackboard pop-ups. Blackboard tests sometimes appear as pop-up windows, and a pop-up blocker may prevent the test from displaying properly.
- You may need to turn off pop-up blockers in your browser and in other software such as Google or Yahoo toolbars and virus protection programs.
- Clear browser cache: Before you take a test, clear your browser’s cache. For instructions on clearing the browser cache, locate the Help area of your browser program and search for “browser cache” or “clear browser cache” to get instructions for your specific browser.
- Close all other programs running on your computer before taking a test. Having multiple programs open may cause problems that may result in loss of quiz data.

**During the test:**
- Do not leave the computer idle while a test is in progress. Your Blackboard session will automatically end after a period of inactivity.
- Make sure you use a compatible browser when working in the Blackboard environment. Go through the 5 Steps to Prepare for Using Blackboard tutorial on isl.tamucc.edu
- Some tests may only be taken once. Do not begin a test until you are ready.
- Do not use your web browser’s Back or Forward buttons when working in the Blackboard environment, and when taking a test.
- If the test is set to display one question at a time, make sure that you have selected the best answer before moving on to the next question. Use the navigation arrows to advance to the next question.
- Focus on completing the test. Do not open any additional software applications, check email, or browse the Internet in other windows.
- Beware of software updates and virus scans. If you have programs such as automatic software updates or virus scans set to run at a particular time, do not take the test during a time when software updates are scheduled to occur.
- Do not resize or refresh the screen after loading the test. Make sure it is the size you want before going into the test. Most browsers refresh the page when you resize the screen. This means it will reload the quiz and may prohibit you from taking the test.
- The majority of questions in assessments are auto-graded. Essay, file response, and short answer questions are not auto-graded. If an assessment contains these question types, your instructor will review the questions and manually provide a score. The grade for the assessment will not be immediately available after the assessment is submitted.

**Sample Test**

This sample test will show how to use the test tool in Blackboard.