

Timesaving Tips Using the Blackboard Grade Center

1. Hide unnecessary columns

Blackboard by default adds several new columns to the Grade Center, including: Username, Student ID, Last Access, and Availability. There are two options to hide columns in the Grade Center, Hide from Students (on/off) (students will not see the column category in their My Grades), and Hide from Instructor View. How to: click the down arrow next to the title of the column, then click either Hide from Students (on/off) or Hide from Instructor View. **Keep Last Access if you are interested in tracking student patterns and Bb access to your specific course.*

2. Organize columns

New columns added to the Grade Center are by default added at the end of the Grade Center, with Total and Weighted Total columns near the beginning. Reorder columns to a logical order, such as sequential order by due date. Note - The order in which students see their individual assignment scores in My Grades is the order of the columns in the Full Grade Center View. How to: Select Manage from the tabs above the Grade Center, then click Column Organization. Click and drag the multi-directional arrows next to each column's name, to reorder them.

3. Create customized "Smart Views"

A smart view is a focused look at the Grade Center that shows only the columns that match a set of criteria. Smart views can be especially important for instructors who are team-teaching and responsible for grading only "certain" students and don't need to see the entire Grade center. How to: Select Manage from the tabs above the Grade Center, then click Create Smart Views. Click the Create Smart View button. Enter a name for the view and then select the type of view, criteria, and any desired filtering. Click the Submit button to save.

4. Shorten column titles by adding Grade Center display name

In addition to the descriptive column name assigned to grade, a shortened Grade Center display name not exceeding 15 characters can be added that will become the column's header in the Grade Center. How to: When adding a new column, enter the shortened column title in the Grade Center Name box.

5. Use Blackboard Rubrics

Blackboard rubrics can help you more effectively grade and help students understand assignment expectations and grading decisions. How to: From the Control Panel, click Course Tools. Click Rubrics Click Create Rubric. Provide a name for the Rubric. Optionally, provide a Description. Edit the Rubric Grid and then associate the rubric with an online assignment, discussion board forum, blog, journal, wiki..etc.

6. Provide feedback on any student scores

Comments can be added to any score. Add comments to student scores when you want to provide individual feedback or clarification on a score. Comments are visible to students in My Grades. How to: Enter the score in a cell. Then, click the down arrows and click Quick Comment. Enter comments in the Feedback to User box. Optional Grading Notes can also be added available only for instructors and teaching assistants.

8. Mass download of student assignments

You can download assignment submissions to review them offline. Choose to download all or only selected submissions as a single ZIP file. How to: In the Grade Center, access the assignment column's menu and select Assignment File Download. On the Download Assignment page, select the student submissions to download -OR- select the check box in the header bar to choose all available submissions. Select Submit.

9. Automatically drop the lowest grade

An assortment of grade computation features are available, including the capability to easily drop the lowest grade from scores within a given category. Columns containing scores must be assigned to the same category. How to: Click the down arrows next to the title of the Weighted Total column, then click Edit Column Information. Select the categories you wish to include in computing the weighted total grade and note the percentage weight for each category. Under Drop Grades for the category, enter 1 in the lowest grades box. Click the Submit button to save.

10. Send Reminders from the Grade Center (brand new)

Instructors can now send email reminders from Grade Center columns to students and members of groups who have missing coursework. Students receive a system-generated email that lists the course, coursework, and the due date if included. How to: Click on the down arrow next to the specific column in the Grade Center and select send reminder.

11. Downloading the Blackboard Grade Center to create class list and record of grades

How to: Go to the Full Grade Center. Click on Work Offline(right side of screen), then choose Download, for a class list tick User Information Only or the settings of your choice. The default setting are good. Click Submit. Click Download. Find and open the downloaded file. You may also use the downloaded file to upload grades.

Other Blackboard Time Saving Tips

1. Have the students take a syllabus quiz or submit an online assignment to make sure they have read the syllabus.

Sample questions might include...

What are the preferred methods of communicating with the instructor?

Why is logging in regularly and reading announcements helpful to succeeding online?

Where are the assignment due dates located?

Is late work accepted?

What is the policy for making up an exam?

Where is technical support information located?

What does substantive mean in regards to discussion posts?

How are the learning materials, such as readings, videos and lectures helpful?

What happens if a student plagiarizes material?

Are there extra credit opportunities?

2. Set up a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Discussion Board Forum

During the semester, you'll receive many student emails that ask the same questions over and over. Encourage them to post their questions to a FAQ forum and then compile these questions into an FAQ page in your Bb site and keep it updated each semester. Then, tell students to read this FAQ page before asking any questions.

3. Reuse assignment comments for student feedback.

The assignment comments to students are very similar every semester. You can capture these routine comments and save in a Word file. Since these comments are tailored to your specific course, you can reuse them or customize them quickly. This tip can be applied to the weekly announcement, email responses.

4. Roll over dates from semester to semester.

In every new semester, you will spend hours updating due dates, availability dates, and adaptive release of your course content, such as announcements, discussion forums, assignments, blogs, or exams. In Blackboard, you can use the “Date Management” tool to rollover content from a previous course to correspond with new dates in semester. It can save you hours of setup time. Tutorial:

https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Instructor/Course_Content/Reuse_Content/Date_Management

5. Record ‘changes you want to make to your course’ throughout the semester.

Create an area that is not visible to your students and then as the semester progresses, make notes to yourself about changes and additions you want to make to your course so that it’s clearly visible the next you are ready to course copy content over.

6. Use Qwickly to send mass emails to multiple courses, post Announcements and make your courses available. Qwickly is available on your Bb portal.

7. Install the new Bb Instructor Mobile App.

Blackboard Instructor allows instructors to preview content and assessments, create and reply to discussion board threads, review, create and send announcements. Future enhancements are being developed.

<https://www.blackboard.com/mobile-learning/blackboard-instructor.aspx>

8. Don't forget your library liaison!

Your library liaison can be added as a TA to your course so that she can provide research assistance to you and your students! She can help identify relevant library material supporting course assignments including research databases, e-books, open education resources, primary sources, or unique resources from GVSU University Libraries.

<https://www.gvsu.edu/library/librarians-by-subject-30.htm>

10. Use Blackboard Collaborate Ultra for office hours, advising and assisting in student groupwork.

Bb Collaborate Ultra is a real-time synchronous video conferencing tool that lets you add files, share applications, and use a virtual whiteboard to interact. Google Chrome is the preferred web browser but you don't need to install any additional software to use the tool.

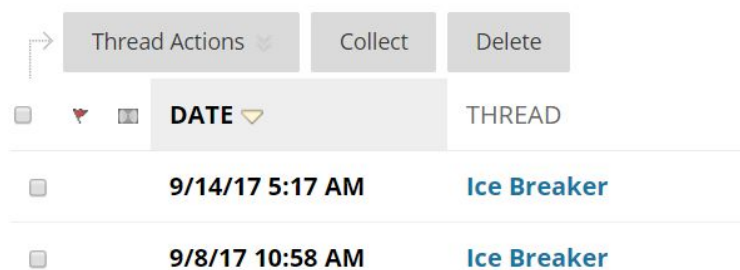
<https://www.gvsu.edu/elearn/help/blackboard-collaborate-ultra-34.htm>

11. Inform students of your availability.

This includes how often you will be participating on the discussion boards, when to expect a response to email, when you are holding virtual office hours, etc. It is "ok" to let your students know that you won't be checking email or responding to discussion board posts on the weekend. Although they can access your Blackboard course 24/7, that doesn't mean you also have to be available 24/7. Be clear about your availability. If assignment due dates are Sundays at midnight, students need to make sure that they are emailing their questions prior to 5pm on Friday. For example, "I read and respond to the discussion board five out of seven days a week, usually taking off Friday and Saturday."

12. Collect discussion board threads for easier/faster reading!

In addition to the Discussion Board grading function and creating Bb rubrics, use the "collect" function to easily read and collect multiple threads.



The screenshot shows a Blackboard discussion board interface. At the top, there are three buttons: 'Thread Actions' (with a dropdown arrow), 'Collect', and 'Delete'. Below these buttons is a table with columns for 'DATE' (with a dropdown arrow) and 'THREAD'. The table contains two rows of data:

DATE	THREAD
9/14/17 5:17 AM	Ice Breaker
9/8/17 10:58 AM	Ice Breaker

13. Flag threads!

The nice thing is that no one else sees your flag. It's a great function when you need to revisit a particular thread. Click on the "checkbox" and then select "flag" from the "message actions" drop-down menu. Flags can be cleared when you no longer need to flag an item.