Blackboard is a great tool for enhancing learning for both face-to-face and online classes. This quick guide will help you to use it effectively. The main topics covered will be:

1. **Access to Blackboard**
2. **My Courses**
3. **My Blackboard**
4. **Frequently Used Content and Tools**
5. **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**
6. **Student Resources**

**ACCESS TO BLACKBOARD**

All academic members of the CUNY community (instructors and students) receive Blackboard access automatically. You can access Blackboard through the Guttman portal at [my.guttman.cuny.edu](http://my.guttman.cuny.edu). Click on **Blackboard**, then use your CUNY credentials to login (CUNYfirst Username@login.cuny.edu and CUNYfirst password). If you do not know your CUNY Portal ID or forgot your password, use the **Forgot Password** link to gain access.
**MY COURSES**

You will see all courses for which you are registered in the **My Courses** section of the Blackboard home page. Simply click on the link of the course you wish to enter. While your instructor can choose any page of the course to be the homepage, you will frequently see the **Announcements** page upon entering the course site. You should check this page frequently to ensure that you are up-to-date on class activities.

![A list of your courses with current announcements](image)

**MY BLACKBOARD**

**My Blackboard** and the global navigation menu are accessible by clicking the arrow next to your name in the page header. From this menu, you can access all your courses and personal settings.

![My Blackboard](image)
**My Blackboard Tools**

- **Bb Home**: Provides an overview of the items that are due and five recently graded items.

- **Posts**: Displays recent posts, comments, and replies from discussions, blogs, journals, and wikis in all your courses and organizations.

- **Updates**: View a list of notifications that alert you to important events and information in all your courses and organizations. For example, you can see when an assignment has been graded.

- **My Grades**: View your recent grades for each assignment, test, and activity in all of your courses. Sort the grades by date or course, access your submissions, and view upcoming work.

- **Calendar**: Keep track of upcoming assignments, events, and other due dates.

**Home**: [cuny.edu](http://cuny.edu)

**Help**: Blackboard manuals, tutorials, and more.

**FREQUENTLY USED CONTENT AND TOOLS**

You access course content from links on the course menu. Links that hold content are called content areas. For example, an instructor may add a content area that contains a week’s worth of course material. “Week 1” may include content such as readings, assignments, a discussion, and a link to a website. Select an item to open it. Your instructors can add different types of content to your courses, such as files, text, assignments, images, multimedia, and links. They can organize content in folders, learning modules, and lesson plans.
Although instructors may customize their Blackboard course menu and content, here are some of the frequently used types of content and tools you may see:

- **Syllabus**: A syllabus may contain course information, objectives, grading information, instructor contact information, dates, and textbook information.

- **Assignments**: Instructors use assignments to assess your mastery of course content and objectives. Assignments can have associated files 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.

- **Test**: Instructors use tests to assess your mastery of course content and objectives. Your instructors often assign point values to questions in the test. Your answers are submitted for grading. 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, tests 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.
  - Be automatically graded, require manual grading by your instructor, or a combination of both.
  - Before you take a test, make sure you've read all the instructions provided to you by your instructor and asked them any questions you may have about the test itself.

- **Course link**: A course link is a shortcut to an item, tool, or area in a course for quick access to materials.

- **Content folder**: Instructors can use folders and sub-folders to group related material, such as a “Week 1 Case Studies” folder inside the “Week 1 Assignments” folder.

- **Learning module**: A learning module is a content container. You navigate through the content from a table of contents. Your instructor can add all types of content, such as text, images, assignments, and tests.

- **Lesson plan**: A lesson plan is a content container. A lesson plan can contain lesson profiles, instructional objectives, and the content items you need to complete a lesson.

- **Discussions or Discussion Board**: A course tool within Blackboard used to promote interaction and sharing of ideas within a course. Course members can have the same thoughtful discussions that take place in the traditional classroom, but don't need to be in the same location or time zone. You can take the time to consider your responses carefully. Discussion board forums may be graded or ungraded and each forum may contain one or more topics, each of which is called a thread.

- **Journals**: Provides a personal space for you to communicate with your instructor. You can also use a journal as a self-reflective tool to post your opinions, ideas, and concerns about your course, or discuss and analyze course related materials. Your instructor can choose to make journal entries private or public, allowing all course members to view all entries. You can read what other students wrote and build on those ideas.

- **My Grades**: If your instructor posts grades online, this 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. 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.

- **Tools**: a list of additional Blackboard features that your instructor has made available to you. Instructors can add a shortcut to a specific tool in the course menu, such as the discussion board or blogs. Or, if the Tools link appears on the course menu, you can access all available tools from this page.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Why can't I see my class in Blackboard?
If you’re not seeing a course you just registered for in CUNYfirst, it takes 24-48 hours from the time you register or change your registration in CUNYfirst for it to update in Blackboard. If your course is listed as "not currently available", please 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 courses, not all instructors choose to use it.

I see a class that I have taken previously, how do I remove it from the My Courses menu?
Some instructors will keep their courses available after the course ends. You cannot remove or delete these courses but you can hide them from view by clicking on the small gear icon in the upper right hand corner of the My Courses module. On the Personalize: My Courses page, deselect the Course Name box and all check marks in the course's row that you no longer want to see. Click Submit to save the changes.

My instructor says I should check my email but I did not get anything.
Instructors may send emails through Blackboard to share announcements and other information. If you are not receiving emails sent through Blackboard, you can check the email address that is associated with your Blackboard account. In the global navigation menu, click the Update Email link under Tools. Verify the email address listed for your account. If it is valid, check your email spam folder. Users may have only one email address in Blackboard. In most cases, Blackboard uses the same email address as the CUNY Portal. If this address is not the one you use, you can change it, but it must be a CUNY email address.

Note: Updating your email address in Blackboard will not change the email address used in CUNYfirst, the CUNY Portal, or any other CUNY system. It will only change the email address used by Blackboard.

Why does my course menu look different in each course?
Instructors have the ability to personalize their course menu. They can add or remove different content areas specific to their course. It is important that you go through each content area on the course menu to familiarize yourself with how the course is set up.

How do I access and submit my class Assignments?
1. Click the Assignment link on the course menu or the content area where the assignment is posted.
2. Click the name of the assignment.
3. Click Browse My Computer to select a file to attach or Write Submission to type your response.
4. Click Submit. A success message appears confirming the submission. If you press Save as Draft, your instructor will not receive your completed assignment.
Note: 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.

How do I reply in a Discussion Board?
1. On the course menu, click the Discussions link.
2. On the Discussion Board page, click the name of the forum you want to access.
3. On the Forum page, click the name of the Thread in which you want to post.
5. Enter the Subject and type your reply in the Message text box.
6. Click Submit.

Note: When composing long messages, write them offline in a word processing or notepad program that you can save locally. Then, paste the message into discussions. This can provide you with peace of mind as well as a way to recover your work in case of technical difficulties.

How do I create a thread in the Discussion Board?
1. On the course menu, click the Discussions link.
2. On the Discussion Board page, click the Forum name.
3. On the Forum page, click Create Thread.
4. Enter the Subject and your Message in the text boxes.
5. Click Submit.

Note: Instructors can allow students to edit or delete threads or replies but usually this option is not allowed. If the edit/delete setting is allowed then you will see those buttons at the bottom of your thread or reply after it has been posted.

Why do my assignments or discussion forums disappear from view?
Instructors can set date and time restrictions that will limit your access to items in Blackboard. If your instructor sets a restriction, once that date and time passes, you will no longer see that item. It is important to read all instructions so that you are aware of due dates.
How do I take tests in Blackboard?

1. Click on the content area where your test is located.
2. Click on the name of the test.
3. On the next page, select **Begin**. If your test requires a password, enter it now and click **Submit**.
4. Navigate through questions by using the > or >> arrows, if necessary.
5. Save your progress by clicking **Save All Answers**.
6. Click **Submit** to finish your test.

**Note:** It is recommended that you take your test on a desktop computer or laptop. Instructors can design tests specifically for mobile devices but that is up to your instructor and not common. When the instructor creates the test, they can choose whether to allow you to go back and check previous answers. Remember, some tests have a time limit set by the instructor. You will see this on the instructions page before you begin the test. There will also be a countdown timer that appears on the test page itself.

I lost network connection while taking my test, what do I do?

If you have a technical issue or lose network connection while taking a test in Blackboard, you want to first notify your instructor that you are having an issue. Losing network connection can cause your test to auto submit. It is up to your instructor if they want to allow you another attempt to take the test.

What is Blackboard Collaborate?

*Blackboard Collaborate* is web conferencing software that is built into Blackboard. This tool can be used to have a meeting with your instructor and your classmates or watch previously record lectures. You can find Collaborate under **Tools** on the course menu.

Is there a mobile app for Blackboard?

Yes, you can download and install Blackboard for your mobile device. For further information visit the Blackboard Mobile Apps page on the CUNY Blackboard Resources site at: [bit.ly/cunybbmobile](https://bit.ly/cunybbmobile)

I'm having trouble accessing a PDF, audio/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. 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.

STUDENT RESOURCES

The user guides presented on the CUNY website provide useful information on how to get the most out of Blackboard. Presented in a variety of text and video formats, the information will help you perform many common Blackboard tasks. You can access the materials here: [bit.ly/cunybbstudent](https://bit.ly/cunybbstudent)

Blackboard has a playlist of videos for students to learn how to use the tools in your courses. These short on demand video tutorials are targeted just for you, explaining how to be successful in your online learning course environment: [bit.ly/bbstudentvideos](https://bit.ly/bbstudentvideos)