Online Course Usability Best Practices

Making Your Content Findable

Use Predictable Design
Organize your content so that students can easily predict where each item they may need to access is located.

Organize Your Content
- Use a single organizational methodology—either temporal or categorical—throughout the course.
- Create folders first, then build the content inside of them.
- Do not use too many interior folders so that students must click through many levels in order to find needed content.
- Create a video introducing yourself and how your course is organized.

Use Intuitive Names
- Give all your content intuitive, easy-to-understand names.
- Use the Link Title field in uploaded documents to change less intuitive document names to more intuitive ones.

Maximizing Course Usability

Create Useful Menus
- Use your Course Menu to create shortcuts and links to content and resources your students will need to frequently access.
- Design your course first, then build out your Course Menu.
- Beware of putting too much on the Course Menu, however. Students shouldn’t have to scroll a long way or scan dozens of menu items to find what they need.
- Drag and drop items, and use Dividers and Subheaders in the Course Menu to organize it.

Colors
- Use light text on a dark background or dark text on a light background for maximum readability.
- Avoid busy backgrounds or eye-popping colors.

Images
- If you use a banner in your course, keep it slender.
- Avoid very large images in all areas of the course. Create a Web Link to a version of a large image on the web, or provide the image as downloadable file rather than embedding it directly.
Getting Valuable Information to Your Students

Beware Duplicate Content
- Remember that Course Copy adds content from an old course to a new one, but does not replace or delete any pre-existing content.
- Regularly review the content in your course to make sure there is nothing extraneous or duplicated.
- Delete duplicate content or content that is old or unnecessary.

Wrangle Your Grade Center
- Keep your Grade Center columns limited to only what students are expected to do during this course.
- Use Student Preview to view the My Grades area linked in the Course Menu, to ensure that all information there is relevant and current.
- Use Column Organization view to get a top-level view of what is in your Grade Center, and whether there are any hidden or duplicate columns.
- Delete unnecessary grading columns, or hide them from students (remember that hiding a column from yourself and hiding it from students are two separate actions).

Use Time and Date Restrictions
- Control when students can view content using Time and Date Restrictions.