Modifying the Course Menu in Blackboard

Blackboard Learn (aka Blackboard 9) permits greater flexibility in organizing your course menu so you can better organize the links for your students. In earlier versions of Blackboard you had to resort to adding HTML codes to the name field for the menu text. Now Blackboard has provided tools to add headings and dividers to organize the course menu.

To modify the menu, make sure you are in edit mode. The edit mode switch is located at the top right under the row of tabs (figure 1).

When the edit mode is on, the add item and reorder buttons appear at the top of the menu as well as the drag handles and item editing on either side of the menu items:

When the edit mode is off (this is also what students see) the add item and customize buttons do not appear at the top of the menu:

Figure 1: Edit mode button and related changes in Course Menu.
To add an item to the course menu, you click on the add item button at the top of the course menu (in edit mode) and select the type of item you want to add from the pop-up menu (figure 2).

Figure 2: Add Course Menu item pop-up menu.

Items that can be added to the Course Menu include:

- Content Areas can contain a wide-range of content items including: Assessments, Assignments, Learning Modules, and multimedia files, text documents, PowerPoint files, spreadsheets, etc.
- Tool Links allow access to a specific tool such as Blogs, Email, the Course Calendar, Announcements and more.
- Blank page - a page where you can post information. It’s like creating a link to and individual content item.
- Course Links link to Course Objectives, the Content Collection, and Library e-Reserves.
- Web Links connect users to learning materials outside of the Blackboard Learn.
- Module pages are customizable pages that contain any number of interactive elements. These elements can be tools such as a dictionary or calculator, or can report and display user specific information such as grades, alerts, and tasks.
- Subheaders are bolded headings in the menu which are not linked to content. These are not links. A thin black dividing line is created above each Subheader.
- Divider adds a thick dividing line (same color as menu text) to the Course Menu that can be dragged and dropped between elements.

When you select one of the options from the pop-up menu, you will be prompted for a name for the link (as applicable) any supporting information, type of tool, course area to link to, URL and whether you wish the area to be available to users (figure 3). Click submit when you are finished and the new item will appear on the menu.

Figure 3: Add content area item showing options to complete. When the required fields are complete the Submit button becomes active.

The options on the Add Item menu are the same as in Blackboard 9.1. The look and feel has been updated.
Course Menus can be reordered two ways, via the reorder button at the top of the menu or by using the drag handles on the left side of the menu to drag the item to its new position (figure 4).

Figure 4: Course menu reordinging tools.

Once created, menu items may be modified by using the modify button next to the item, on the right side of the menu (figure 4).

Icons may appear next to menu item when the editing mode is on. These icons indicate when a menu item is not available to student users and when a content area is empty (figure 5).

Figure 5: Menu icon meanings.
As in the past you can change the color and appearance of the course menu. These changes require accessing the Teaching Style link in the control panel, under Customization (figure 6). On the Teaching Style page you can change Course Structure, Course Entry point (first page students see when they enter the course), the Course theme (color scheme), the default menu view (folder or list), default content view, and a banner image for the course entry page.

Figure 6: Clicking on the Teaching Style link under Customization in the Control Panel menu brings up the Teaching Style page.