

Blogs - Helpful Hints

What is the difference between the blog tool and the discussion board?

There are two types of blogs in Blackboard – a **course blog** and an **individual blog**. In a **course blog**, everyone can post topics and comment on each other's topics, so it is very similar to the discussion board. It is 'topic-centric,' like a discussion board. The only difference is in the formatting – the discussion board is organized into 'forums' and 'threads,' which clearly show who is responding to which post. Blogs simply display each topic followed by all of the comments for that particular topic in a vertical list; no indenting or threading. It can be difficult to follow a topic with several comments in tow in a course blog.

An **individual blog** is different in that the author or owner of the blog has full control over the topics posted. Only he/she can post topics and everyone else can comment on them. It is 'author-centric,' rather than 'topic-centric.'

Why should I use a blog in my course?

1. Develop a learning community, an active learning tool.
2. Help students develop writing, research, and critical and analytical thinking skills.
3. Use it as a forum for discussion and collaboration.

How can I be sure it will be successful?

1. Provide examples (find blogs that you want students to emulate) or post a sample yourself.
2. Be specific about requirements and encourage interaction. Require posting and commenting. Suggest the number of words or length that constitutes a substantive post, and set appropriate rules for commentary. Encourage thoughtful critique and civil debate, dialog, and discussion.
3. Associate the blog with specific assignments or topics.

Ideas for Course Blogs:

1. A blog for posting class-related information, discussion topics, links to additional information about relevant topics and readings.
2. A blog for students to contribute their reactions to thought provoking questions posed by the instructor (faculty or TA) or their ideas/opinions about topics discussed in class.

Ideas for Individual Student Blogs:

1. For posting ideas, reactions, and written assignments.
2. Writing assignments: creative writing or opinion pieces on topics being studied in the course.
3. Evaluation: to discuss activities they did in class and what they think about them.

Uses in Group Projects:

1. Complete project work in small groups, assigning each group a different task.
2. Showcase products of project-based learning.