Canvas LMS Course Design

Second Edition

Create and deliver interactive online courses on the Canvas learning management system



Ryan John

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Packt

BIRMINGHAM—MUMBAI

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– Ryan John

Contributors

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About the reviewer

Shaun Holland is an instructional designer and LMS administrator with over 20 years of experience in the administration and application of LMSs. Shaun has cultivated a specialization in online course design, single and programmatic course design, and game-based (game theory) course design where courses are sculpted around the idea of incorporating game-based mechanics. A veteran of US higher education, Shaun has extensive experience transitioning from one LMS to another having completed this process at both a small private school and a large state university. Shaun currently works at a large state university in New Jersey where he helps build and deliver thousands of fully online courses and several graduate degree programs and undergraduate certification courses.

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Preface

Canvas is an online **Learning Management System** (**LMS**) and one of the most powerful teaching tools that educational institutions worldwide have adopted thanks to its streamlined functionality, intuitive user interface, and robust features.

This revised second edition of *Canvas LMS Course Design* will show you how to design, create, and teach engaging classes in online, hybrid, or fusion settings using the Canvas LMS.

The book will guide you through the steps of setting up your Canvas account, creating activities and assignments, designing and customizing the course layout, and teaching your course. Whether you're using Canvas through your institution or using a **Free for Teachers** instance of Canvas, you'll be able to use Canvas for grading, feedback, and communication with and between students. As you progress, you'll learn how to integrate external apps and services with Canvas. Finally, the book features an exclusive section detailing how you can use Canvas's built-in resources as well as other resources to tackle challenges while working with Canvas. Throughout, this book will give you the technical knowledge you need to create unique learning experiences for students.

By the end of this book, you'll be able to successfully teach online with the help of logical descriptions and step-by-step screenshots that clearly explain how to build a phenomenal course.

Who this book is for

This book is for educators who want to use Canvas to deliver instructions in online, hybrid, or fusion teaching models. Whether you're new to online learning or a seasoned expert, you will learn both the primary functions and the advanced features of Canvas with this book. As a minimum, beginner-level experience with online learning is assumed given the widespread implementation of distance learning due to the pandemic.

What this book covers

Chapter 1, *Getting Started with Canvas*, covers how to access Canvas, create an account, and navigate the home screen. Once you have learned your way around the site, you will learn how to set up your Canvas profile, enter your contact information, adjust your general settings, and configure your notification preferences. Next, you will learn how to create a Canvas course and how to begin participating in a course that has been set up by your institution.

Chapter 2, *Building Your Canvas Course*, covers the foundations of building your Canvas course. You will start by exploring the Course Status checklist, which will guide you through the process of building your course. Next, you will consider some important ideas in planning your course and how to best use the features of Canvas for teaching. After this, you will learn how to import content from another course on Canvas or from another LMS. Finally, you will learn how to add your own content to the course, and we will explore the types of assignments and activities you can create within Canvas.

Chapter 3, *Getting Ready to Launch Your Course*, covers how to add students to your course, select which content will be most useful to your students, choose a layout for the sequence of the content, add calendar events, and publish your course. By the end of this chapter, your course will be totally built, organized, designed, and published and you will be ready to begin using Canvas to teach your course.

Chapter 4, *Teaching Your Canvas Course*, teaches you how to communicate with students using the Inbox, post announcements for students to see, use the Gradebook and Learning Mastery features, grade using the SpeedGrader, and schedule and run synchronous online class meetings. Working through these features will ensure you have the skills required to engage with your students in effective and personalized ways to empower them to master the course's content.

Chapter 5, *Exploring Special Features*, looks into some of the more advanced special features available through Canvas. You'll begin by learning how to create collaborations between students that allow them to work on documents together online. Then, you will learn how to set up learning outcomes and create rubrics. Finally, you will look into using the powerful analytics and statistics tools within Canvas to monitor your students' progress, gauge and bolster student engagement, and map interactions between users from course to course.

Chapter 6, *Utilizing and Integrating Apps*, begins by exploring the Canvas mobile app. After becoming familiar with the functionality and power of the Canvas mobile app, you will move on to learning how to integrate outside apps and services into Canvas. These integrations will harness the power of many apps and services that have become prominent in the world of education to engage your students with course content and skills in thoughtful and meaningful ways.

Chapter 7, *Where to Go for Help*, examines the vast number of built-in resources Canvas has to offer that you can utilize to help solve any questions or problems you may encounter. You will also discuss other resources, whether online or through your institution, that can help you solve problems and answer questions you might encounter. You will learn about the Canvas Guides, reporting a problem to Canvas, how to obtain pricing information for an institutional Canvas account, requesting a new feature for Canvas, and finding help from colleagues.

Chapter 8, *Now You're Ready!*, teaches you how to export your course to your computer for preservation or later use. Next, you will tie everything you've learned together through a discussion of how Canvas can help you and your students achieve educational goals while acquiring important 21st-century skills. Given the unprecedented events of 2020 that necessitated all educators to adapt their instruction significantly, often to online platforms such as Canvas, this chapter provides an opportunity for reflection and looks to the future relationship between technology and education.

Appendix: References and Resources, provides information on materials and concepts referenced throughout the book, as well as other resources that you might find helpful as you learn and grow as an online educator. Many of these resources reference broader topics relating to teaching and learning in the 21st century, designing online learning environments, and conceptualizing online education. In addition to a description, connections to Canvas are included for each resource that you might find helpful as you explore online education through Canvas.

To get the most out of this book

Software/Hardware covered in the book	**OS Requirements**
Up-to-date internet browser such as Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, or Windows Internet Explorer	Windows, macOS, or Linux (any)
Smartphone (Apple or Android) for the mobile app discussed in *Chapter 6, Utilizing and Integrating Apps*	Reliable internet connection

Download the color images

We also provide a PDF file that has color images of the screenshots/diagrams used in this book. You can download it here: `https://static.packt-cdn.com/downloads/9781800568518_ColorImages.pdf`.

Conventions used

There are a number of text conventions used throughout this book.

`Code in text`: Indicates code words in text, database table names, folder names, filenames, file extensions, pathnames, dummy URLs, user input, and Twitter handles. Here is an example: "Mount the downloaded `WebStorm-10*.dmg` disk image file as another disk in your system."

Bold: Indicates a new term, an important word, or words that you see onscreen. For example, words in menus or dialog boxes appear in the text like this. Here is an example: "Select **System info** from the **Administration** panel."

> **Tips or important notes**
> Appear like this.

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Section 1: Designing and Creating Your Course

In *Section 1*, you will learn how to customize your user profile and settings, create and sequence course content, and finalize and publish your course.

This section contains the following chapters:

- *Chapter 1*, *Getting Started with Canvas*
- *Chapter 2*, *Building Your Canvas Course*
- *Chapter 3*, *Getting Ready to Launch Your Course*

1
Getting Started with Canvas

Welcome to the updated *Canvas LMS Course Design*! This revised edition will guide you through the world of Instructure Canvas as a Learning Management System. This book covers the use of **Canvas** as a powerful and revolutionary tool for education, both in the traditional classroom and in virtual and hybrid learning environments.

The chapters in *Section 1* explain how to set up your Canvas experience, from setting up your personal profile to designing and building your first course. *Section 2* focuses on teaching you about the tools and features Canvas offers to meet the needs of educators, students, and guardians. With all the skills you will have gained over the course of these two sections, *Section 3* will provide you with additional resources for any questions that may arise, as well as practical ideas for ways to cultivate many of the skills necessary for contemporary learners to succeed. As a product, Canvas has been designed to meet the unique needs of its users within contemporary education. As a powerful educational tool, Canvas opens the door to countless possibilities for you and the students you teach as citizens of the digital age.

As we begin our exploration of Canvas, we will cover the two main instances (or versions) of Canvas that exist and how to access or create your Canvas account for each instance. First, you will learn how to navigate the layout of the site. Once you know your way around, you will learn how to set up your Canvas profile, enter your contact information, adjust your general settings, and configure your notification preferences.

Next, we will learn how to join a course that your school has created for you in an institutional instance of Canvas or how to create a Canvas course yourself. Once we have created a course, we will be ready to move on to building a course in the next chapter.

In this chapter, we will cover the following topics:

- Reviewing instances of Canvas
- Accessing Canvas and creating your account
- Navigating Canvas
- Adjusting your profile, settings, and notifications
- Creating your Canvas course

Technical requirements

To complete this chapter, you will need the following:

- A computer or tablet with internet access
- An up-to-date internet browser such as Chrome, Firefox, or Safari
- An email address to create a Canvas account with
- Any instructional materials or documents that your institution has provided

Reviewing instances of Canvas

A wide range of institutions across the world use Canvas as their institutional **Learning Management System** (**LMS**). In addition, Canvas can be used in a variety of learning situations outside of traditional institutions. To accommodate the different situations in which users may find themselves while teaching or learning, there are two instances or versions of Canvas you may wish to access depending on your teaching situation.

Let's discuss the two instances of Canvas that you may encounter.

Institution-specific instances of Canvas

If the school that you work for uses Canvas for its LMS, you will most likely receive information from the IT department or an administrator regarding the best way to access and use Canvas. Institutional instances of Canvas typically have certain features and settings preset to ensure that every user within the institution has a similar experience while using Canvas.

Canvas is a highly customizable LMS, which means your institution's IT team can customize aspects of Canvas, such as how accounts are created, the look and feel of the site, how courses and course rosters are created or managed, which features are available to users, which settings certain users can access or adjust, additional integrations, and more. As you work your way through this book, it is important to keep in mind that every feature that's discussed may look or function in a slightly different way if you are accessing an institutional instance of Canvas rather than a **Free for Teachers** account.

Each situation is slightly different, so reach out to someone in your IT department or administration to get specific information for your school, especially if the instance of Canvas you are using looks or functions in a different way than described in this book.

Free for Teachers instance of Canvas

Canvas offers a **Free for Teachers** instance of Canvas for educators who do not have access to Canvas through their school. This instance of Canvas allows you to register using any email address, then create and build courses that you would like to teach, regardless of whether you work for an institution that uses Canvas as its LMS. **Free for Teachers** accounts include access to the features and functionality of Canvas, some of which may be limited, altered, or restricted for those using an institutional instance of Canvas.

While **Free for Teachers** accounts have access to the robust features and settings available through Canvas, the default design of Canvas remains user-friendly and intuitive, especially for the most important features and settings.

> **Note**
>
> All the examples and screenshots in this book have been taken from a **Free for Teachers** account since institution-specific instances of Canvas may look different and have customized procedures, features, settings, branding, or color schemes. If you are using an institutional instance of Canvas, prioritize the instructions and guidance that have been provided by your school or IT team in addition to the information in this book.

We will go over how to set up a **Free for Teachers** account in the next section, where we will begin with a discussion of how to access Canvas.

Accessing Canvas and creating your account

In this section, we will learn how to access Canvas. To begin, you will use your web browser to access the Canvas website by using common web browsers such as, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer, and Safari. First, we will address how to log in for institutional instances of Canvas, after which we will cover how to create and log into a **Free for Teachers** account.

Accessing your institution's Canvas site

To access your institution's Canvas site, perform the following steps:

1. Consult any information that your institution has provided to obtain the URL (that is, the web address) for your institution's instance of Canvas.
2. Consult any instructions that your institution has provided for setting up your account and prioritize following the steps in those instructions.
3. Open your web browser and enter the URL for your institution's Canvas site. While your institution's Canvas URL may follow a variety of formats, a common formula for the institutional Canvas URL is `http://institution.instructure.com`, in which you will enter the actual name of your school instead of `institution`. For those teaching in K-12 settings, this may be your school's name or your district's name.
4. If you have instructions from the IT or administrative team at your school, follow those instructions to set up your account. As mentioned previously, each school's situation is slightly different, so you may need to get support for your specific case if you have questions.

You may receive an email invitation to join Canvas that includes a link to a website with clear step-by-step instructions. In other cases, the login credentials that you use to access your school's email account or registration system may automatically be carried over to Canvas, depending on how your school has integrated Canvas with the rest of their management systems.

> **Note**
>
> In most cases, if your institution uses Canvas as its LMS, you do not need to create a **Free for Teachers** account, as described in the following section. However, please consult the members of your school's IT department or administration for specific instructions if you are not sure.

Creating a Free for Teachers account

The following steps will walk you through how to create your own **Free for Teachers** account to access Canvas:

1. To create an account so that you can use the Free for Teachers instance of Canvas, open your web browser and navigate to `http://canvas.instructure.com`.
2. Click on **Need a Canvas account? Click here, it's free!** in the top-right corner. You will be taken to a registration page:

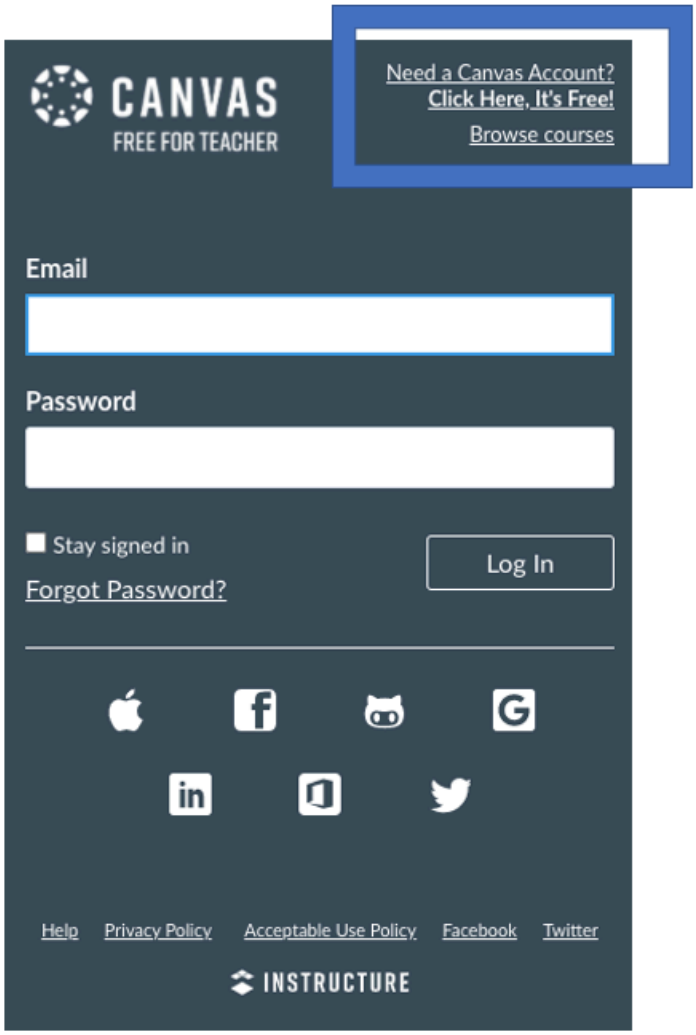


Figure 1.1 – Clicking the link in the top-right corner to create your account

3. Select **I'm a Teacher** on the following page:

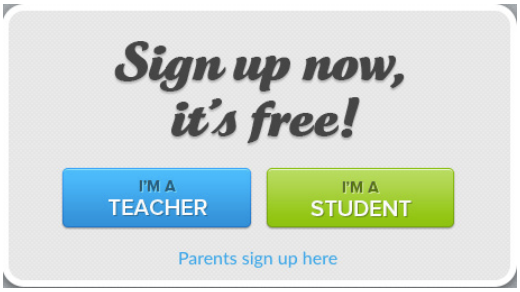


Figure 1.2 – Selecting "I'm a Teacher"

4. Enter your name and select **Teacher** from the **Account Type** drop-down on the right-hand side of the page that appears:

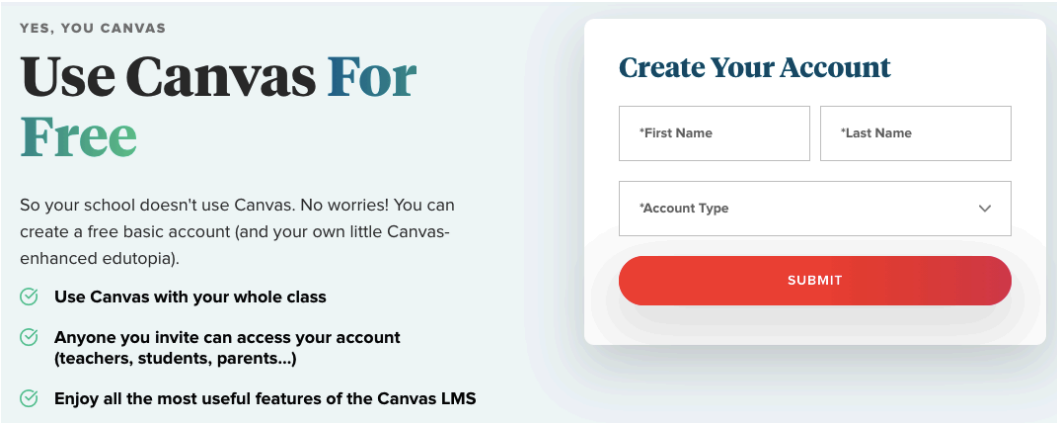


Figure 1.3 – Initial Create Your Account options

5. Fill in your information on the registration screen and select the appropriate options from any drop-down menus that appear. Select **I want to teach my course on Canvas.** from the **Why Canvas?** drop-down menu (unless one of the other options applies to your circumstances better). Enter and make note of the password you will use to log into your account. You'll need to check the marketing tick box at the bottom to proceed, and you can unsubscribe from marketing communications later on if desired. Click **SUBMIT** to continue:

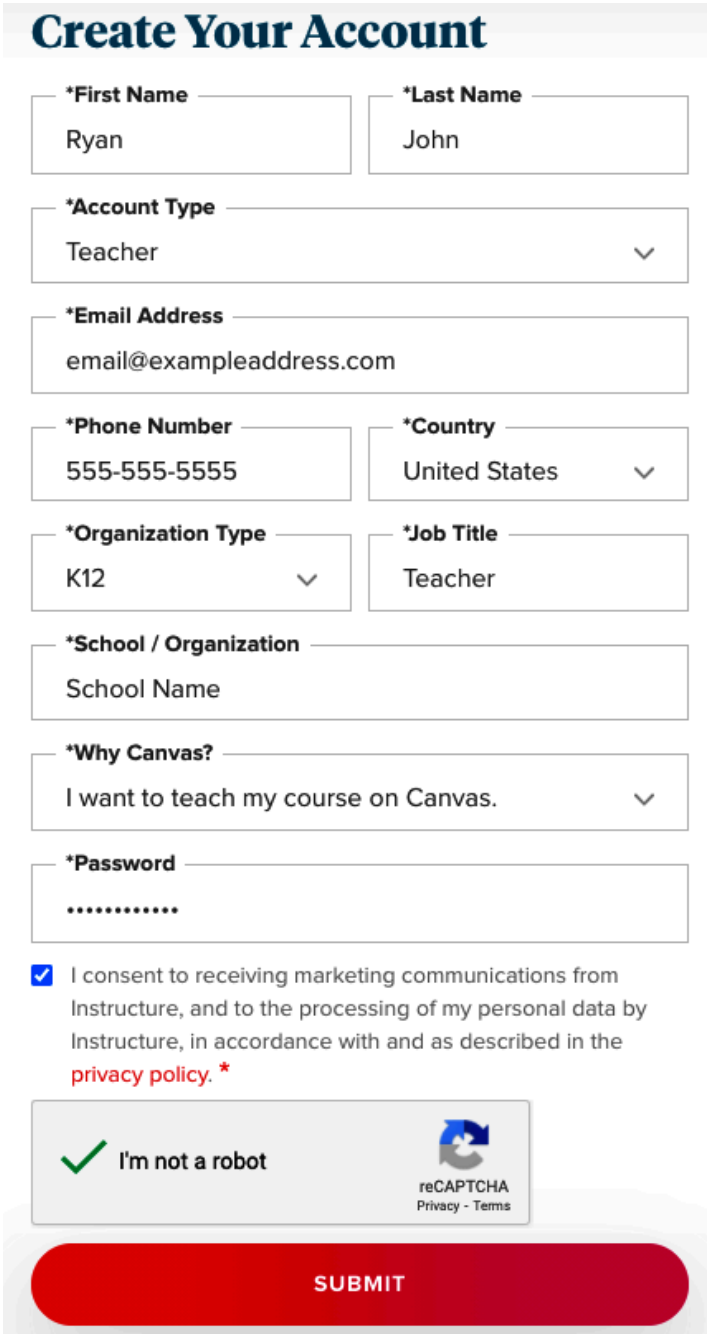


Figure 1.4 – Entering your information on the registration form

6. Once you click **SUBMIT**, you will receive a confirmation email with the steps you need to follow to finalize the account creation process.
7. Once you have successfully created your account, you can return to `http://canvas.instructure.com` and log in using your email address and password to begin using Canvas!

Now that you have learned how to access your institutional instance of Canvas or to create your account to use the **Free for Teachers** instance of Canvas, next, we will explore the layout and navigation tools of the Canvas user interface.

Navigating Canvas

When you log in for the first time, you will be taken to the Canvas **Dashboard**. You may see a pop-up window offering an orientation tour, which Canvas provides to help familiarize you with its layout and features. The tour highlights Canvas' features and includes video explanations of each feature. You can choose **Start Tour** if you would like, or you can click **Not Now** if you would prefer to explore on your own. This book will serve as a resource that will help you review these features throughout your time using Canvas.

> **Note**
>
> If you would like to view the **Welcome Tour** section at any time after you first log in, click on **Help** from the left Global Navigation menu, then scroll down and click **Show Welcome Tour**.

Now that you've logged in, let's explore the three main sections in the layout of Canvas:

- On the left-hand side of the screen, you will see the **Global Navigation** menu, which may include icons for **Account**, **Dashboard**, **Courses**, **Calendar**, **Inbox**, **History**, **Commons**, and **Help**. The arrow icon at the bottom will expand or collapse the menu. The Global Navigation menu, shown in the following screenshot, will usually be visible to you on any page you are viewing in Canvas:

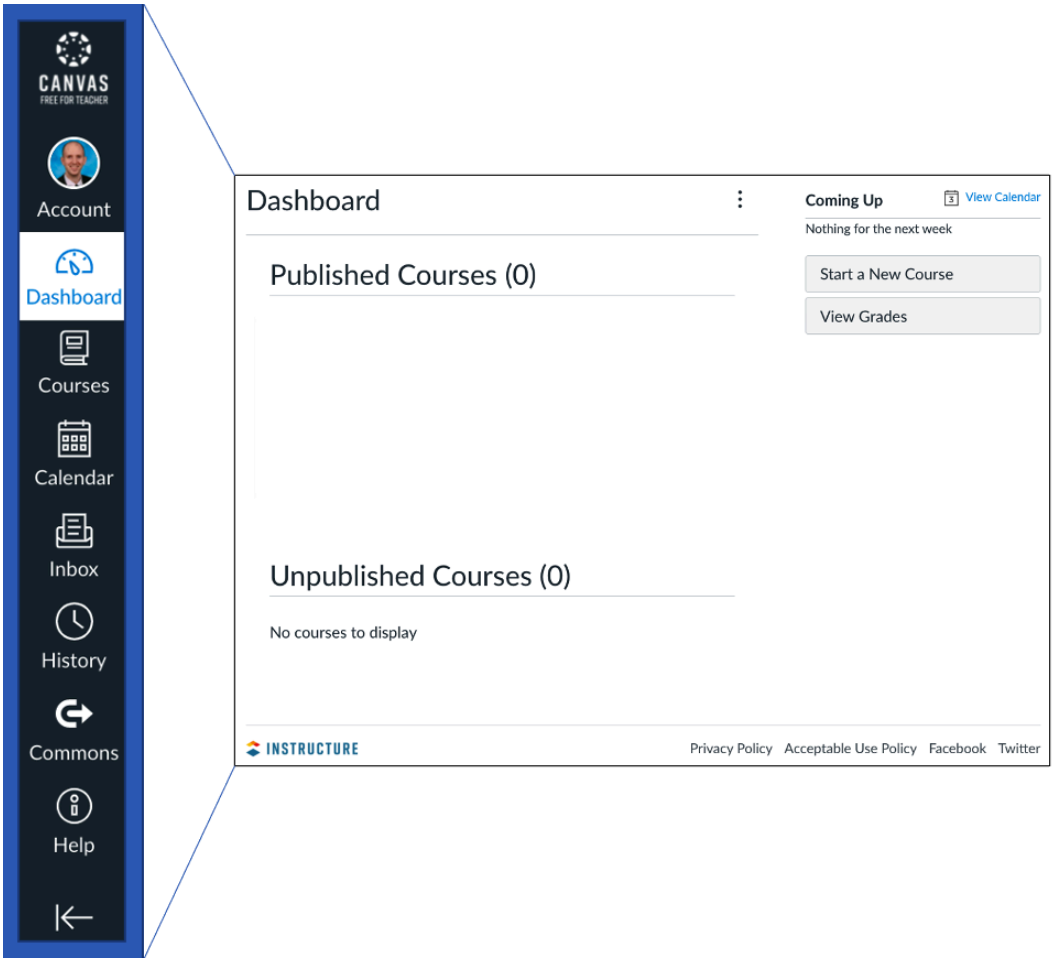


Figure 1.5 – The Global Navigation menu

- In the center of the screen, the largest section will show you the main content of whatever page you are viewing. While you are on the **Dashboard** page, this will display your **Published** and **Unpublished** courses:

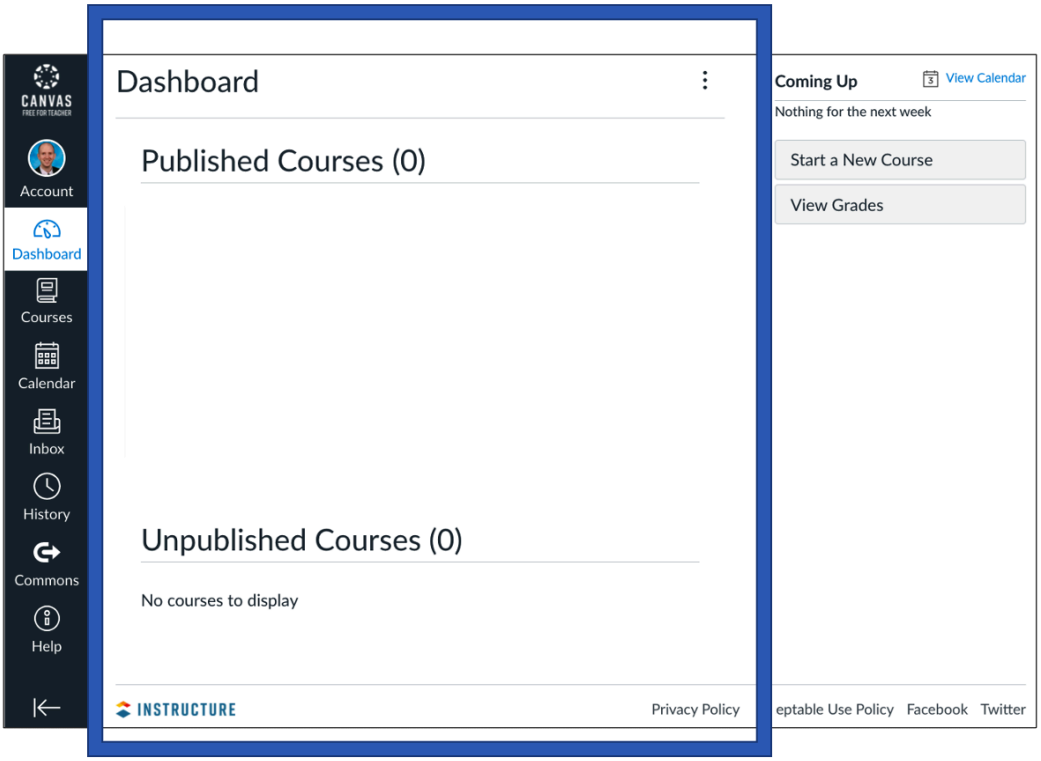


Figure 1.6 – The center content portion of the screen showing the Dashboard

- On the right-hand side of the screen, you will see the **Sidebar** menu, which will show you more detailed options for whatever page you are viewing. When you're viewing the Sidebar menu of the **Dashboard** page once your courses are up and running, it will show you a **To Do** list, as well as assignments or activities that are **Coming Up**:

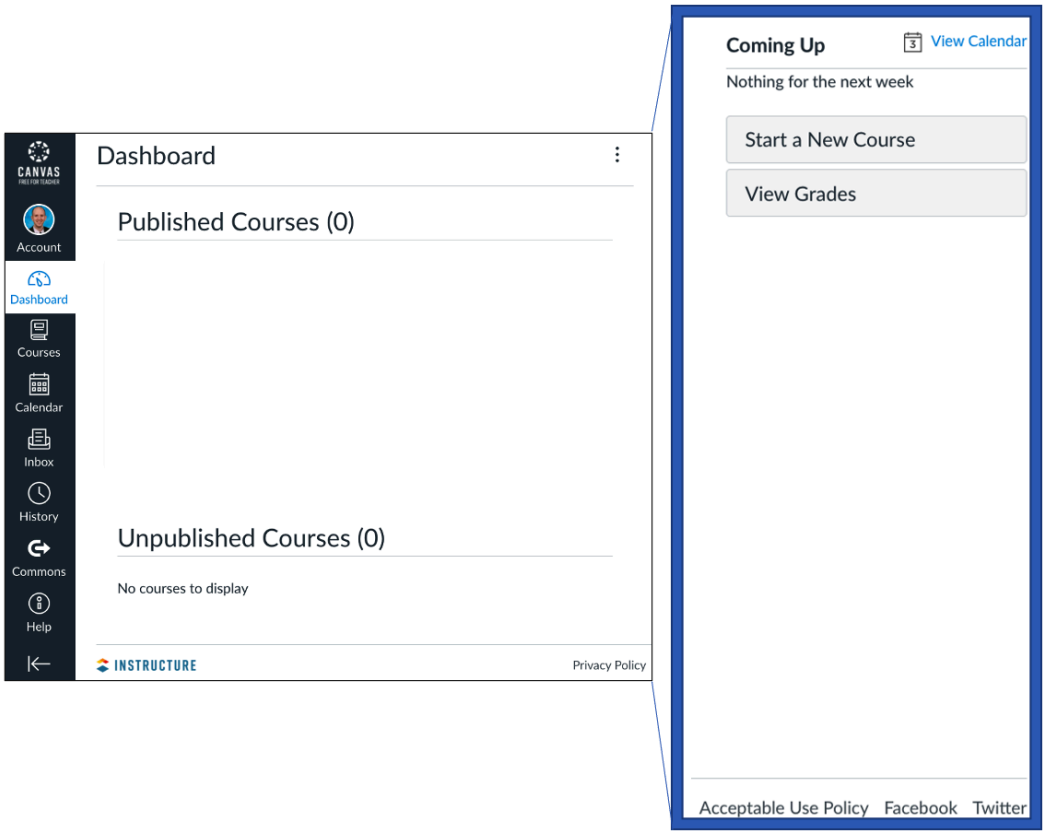


Figure 1.7 – The Sidebar menu

Another helpful section to notice is the menu in the bottom-right corner of the screen. This menu includes links to Canvas' **Privacy policy**, **Acceptable Use Policy, Facebook**, and **Twitter**. These links are useful guides to general information about **Instructure**, the company that runs Canvas, and your usage of Canvas. The bottom menu will usually be visible to you on any page you are viewing within Canvas, just like the left Global Navigation menu.

Now that you're familiar with the basic layout of Canvas, let's work through how to set up your personal settings and communication preferences.

Adjusting your profile, settings, and notifications

In this section, we will address how to set up your Canvas profile, adjust your account settings, and customize your notification settings. If you are using an institutional instance of Canvas, the ability to adjust your profile, settings, and notifications may be different than what's described in this section, but the basics will be the same.

While your individual situation may vary, let's start by covering how to set up your Canvas profile, which other users will see as they interact with you on Canvas.

Editing your profile

Your Canvas profile includes your profile picture, name, pronouns, contact information, bio, and website links. To add and edit this information, follow these steps:

1. Click on **Account** at the top of the left Global Navigation menu.
2. Select **Profile** from the menu that appears. This will bring you to your profile page.
3. On your profile page, click on **Edit Profile** from the right sidebar menu.
4. This will open editing boxes for the **Name**, **Pronouns**, **Title**, **Biography**, and **Links** fields. You can click on each editing box to adjust or add content.
5. Once you've finished editing, click on **Save Profile** at the bottom of the screen.

Adding detailed information to your Canvas profile will help other users gain a better understanding of who you are as a person. Within a fully online learning environment, establishing personal connections with other users can be very important in building a productive and comfortable learning community.

Once you have saved your updates, they will be visible to other Canvas users when they view your profile. You may notice a message under the **Contact** section that mentions you have not registered any services. We will learn how to add registered services and add your contact information once we've covered how to add a profile picture.

Adding a profile picture

Including a photo of yourself immediately makes your presence on Canvas more relatable and inviting. When participants can see a photo of who is writing to them, providing feedback, or posting on discussion boards, the Canvas community becomes more vibrant, personalized, and engaging. Especially in fully online learning environments where students and the teacher are never physically together, a profile picture can be an important way to build relationships and make interactions more personal.

To add or change your profile picture, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the gray outline of a person next to your name on your profile page. Notice that when you hover your mouse over this gray image, an icon appears in the bottom right of the image that looks like a pencil. You can click this pencil icon to add or edit your profile picture.
2. Once you've clicked on the pencil icon, a pop-up will appear with options along the top to **Upload a Picture** from your computer, **Take a Picture** of yourself using your built-in camera, or to add your globally recognized avatar **From Gravatar** if that is a service you utilize. If you are not familiar with Gravatar, you can select one of the first two options.
3. If you choose to **Upload a Picture**, click on **choose a picture**, find and select the photo file from your computer, follow the on-screen instructions to crop your photo, and then click **Save**.
4. If you choose to **Take a Picture**, provide permissions in the pop-up window to **Allow** Canvas to use your built-in camera. You will see a preview appear. Make sure to smile, click **Take Picture**, and then click **Save**.
5. If you use Gravatar, you can add your avatar **From Gravatar** by entering the email address connected to your Gravatar and following the on-screen instructions, and then clicking **Save**.

Once you have added your profile picture, it will appear next to your name on your profile page, as well as other places throughout Canvas, when you use a variety of features.

> **Note**
> The pencil icon you saw when you hovered over your profile picture is the symbol for editing something within Canvas. Whenever you see the pencil icon, you can click on the icon to edit what you're viewing.

Next, we will learn how to adjust your account settings and add alternative forms of contact, including email addresses, cell phone numbers, or registered services such as Google Docs, Twitter, or Skype.

Adjusting your account settings

To adjust your account settings, such as your display name, contact information, language, time zone, and integrated web services, click on the **Account** option of the left Global Navigation menu, and then click on **Settings**.

Let's begin by adjusting your contact information so anything you receive from Canvas goes to an address or device that you check frequently.

Adding a new email address

On your **Settings** page, the **Ways to Contact** section of the right sidebar menu includes the email address with which you registered. It also includes the option to add more email addresses and other methods of contact. To add an email address, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **+ Email Address** link.
2. A pop-up window will appear that will let you add an alternate email address. You have the option of signing into Canvas with the new email address if you check the box below the new email address you have entered.
3. Click on **Register Email** in the bottom-right corner of the pop-up window.
4. Check the email account you've just added for a confirmation email from Canvas, which will contain instructions for verifying your new email address so that you can use it for Canvas.

Once you have verified your new email address, you can continue editing your contact information.

Adding a cell phone number for SMS text notifications

Canvas offers the option for you to receive notifications about course activity directly to your cell phone. To add your cell phone number so that you receive SMS text message notifications, perform the following steps:

1. On the **Settings** page, click on **+ Contact Method** under the **Ways to Contact** section of the right sidebar menu.
2. In the pop-up window, enter your cell phone number and select your provider. The SMS email address should automatically appear once you select your provider.

3. Once you have entered your number and selected your provider, click on **Register SMS** in the bottom-right corner of the pop-up window.
4. You will then see a new pop-up window appear in your browser that asks for a confirmation code. You should receive a text on your cell phone with a case-sensitive confirmation code, which you should then enter into the pop-up window on your screen. Then, click on **Confirm**.

   If you do not receive a text with a confirmation number and you entered your phone number correctly, click on the **Re-Send Confirmation** link in the pop-up window. If you entered your number incorrectly, close the pop-up window and begin the process again.
5. Once you have confirmed your cell phone number with the confirmation code, you will be able to receive notifications via text message.

With your contact information updated, you're now ready to personalize your general settings within Canvas.

> **Note:**
> For international users using an institutional instance of Canvas, your institution may have the **SMS text notification** feature enabled for international numbers. In this case you would follow the on-screen instructions that appear to select your country and enter your mobile number. The **SMS text notification** feature may be unavailable for international users using a **Free for Teachers** instance of Canvas or if your institution has not enabled this feature. If this is the case, you can still receive notifications in several other ways discussed in this chapter.

Editing your general settings

As with many other online services you may have encountered, configuring the general settings of your Canvas account is important so that your account functions correctly and accurately. Your general settings include your name, pronouns, preferred language, current time zone, and password. Also found within the general settings menu are the options to receive Instructure informational emails. To edit your general settings, perform the following steps:

1. Select **Account** from the left Global Navigation menu, and then click **Settings**.
2. On the right sidebar menu, click on the **Edit Settings** button underneath the **Ways to Contact** menu, as shown in the following screenshot:

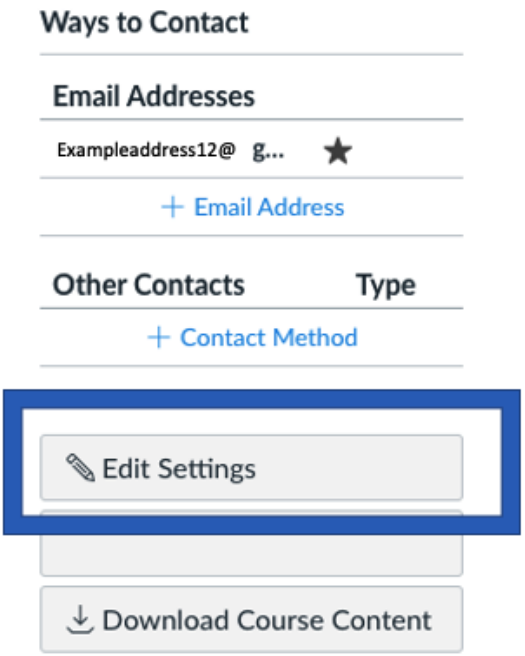


Figure 1.8 – Edit Settings button

3. You will see textboxes and drop-down menus appear in the center part of the screen so that you can adjust your general settings. When adjusting the **Full Name**, **Display Name**, **Sortable Name**, and **Pronouns** fields for your account, each section includes a brief description of where that name or item will appear. For example, if you are teaching a college course, you may want your name to be displayed with the title of *Professor* or *Dr.* for discussion posts, messages, and comments. The following screenshot provides an example of each type:

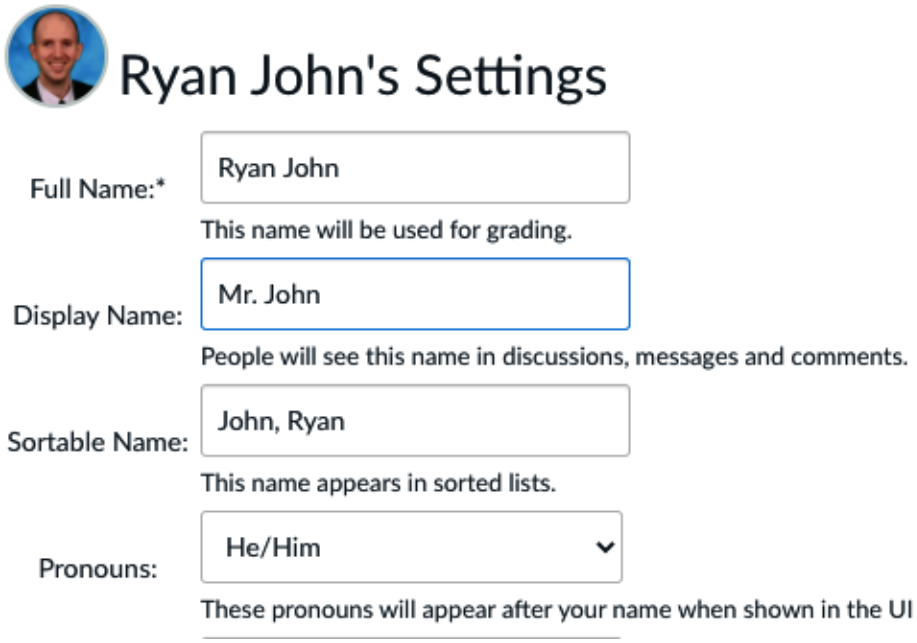


Figure 1.9 – Example settings

4. Below your name settings, you can use the **Default Email**, **Language**, and **Time Zone** drop-down menus to adjust the email used for Canvas, the language of your Canvas experience, and the time zone in which you live, respectively. Click on the drop-down menu and select from the listed options to adjust any of these settings.

> **Note**
>
> The **Time Zone** option you choose in your settings will only apply to your account. Any due dates posted on Canvas will be adjusted to each user's time zone, so keep that in mind for later if you are teaching students in multiple time zones.

5. You can check the box next to **I want to receive information, news and tips from Instructure** if you would like Instructure to email you about certain features of Canvas. You will not receive informational product emails from Instructure if you do not check this box, though you will receive course notification emails based on your notification settings.

6. To change your password, check the box next to **Change Password**; a new menu will open below that checkbox. If you are using an institutional instance of Canvas, this feature may function differently, and you may need to contact your IT department or change your password elsewhere, depending on your institution's password procedures.
7. Using the drop-down menu that appears, select the email address for which you would like to change the password. Enter your old password, your new password, and confirm your new password in the appropriate boxes, as shown in the following screenshot:

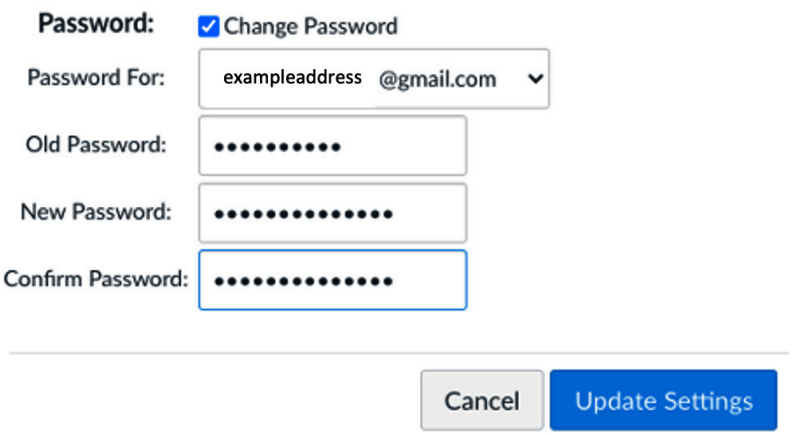


Figure 1.10 – Changing your password in the Free for Teachers instance of Canvas

8. When finished, click on the blue **Update Settings** box, below your settings information.

> **Tip**
> Including your personal pronouns shows others who are using Canvas how to refer to you and normalizes people sharing their pronouns instead of assuming one another's pronouns. This small gesture can make a huge difference for people throughout the gender spectrum to feel welcomed and accepted in your online learning environment. For more information, visit `https://www.glsen.org/pronouns`.

Moving on from your general account settings, let's explore some of the innovative connections you can configure between Canvas and other common online services, referred to as **Registered Services**.

Using Registered Services

Canvas allows you to link external services to your Canvas account so that you can integrate Canvas into your life online. Utilizing **Registered Services** allows you to connect Canvas to other websites, programs, and networks you already use. Again, if you are using an institutional instance of Canvas, your options for external services may be different compared to those discussed in this section, but the basics will be the same.

If you already have accounts with any of the services shown in the following screenshot, you can link your Canvas profile to your external accounts to utilize the features of those external services:

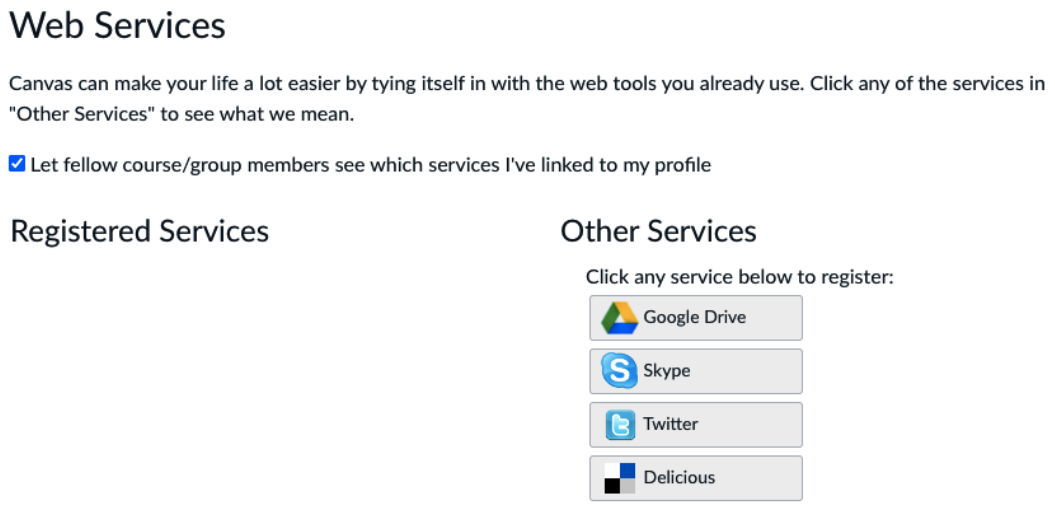


Figure 1.11 – Examples of available Registered Services that have not been added yet

You can choose whether other Canvas users can see **Registered Services** or not by clicking or unclicking the checkbox underneath **Web Services**.

To connect **Registered Services** to your Canvas account, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the service you would like to link to your Canvas account listed under **Other Services**.
2. Follow the onscreen instructions carefully to link your Canvas account to your external service account. Each service has slightly different instructions that appear, but it typically involves logging into the service and providing permission to link the service with Canvas. The on-screen instructions will tell you what to do for each service.

3. Once you have linked Canvas to one of the listed services, that service will appear under the **Registered Services** heading, as shown in the following screenshot:

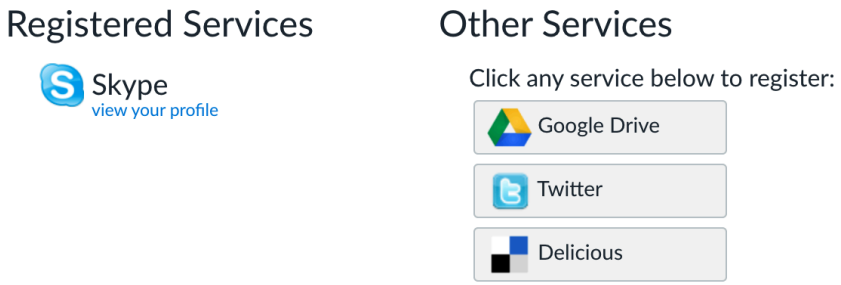


Figure 1.12 – Examples of added Registered Services

Once you've added **Registered Services**, you'll have the option to utilize the functionality of that service throughout various features of Canvas. Below the **Registered Services** section of the **Settings** page, in the **Free for Teachers instance** section of Canvas, you'll notice two other sections related to **Approved Integrations** and **Features**.

Customizing approved integrations and features

The **Approved Integrations** section shows you a list of third-party apps that are currently integrated into your instance of Canvas. You can view details of these or adjust these integrations using the links in this section. You can add a new integration by clicking the **+ New Access Token** and following the on-screen instructions.

The **Features** section shows several specific features that you can enable or disable in your instance of Canvas. To view a description of the feature, click the drop-down arrow to the left of the feature's title. To enable a feature, click the red **X** icon under the **State** column to the right of the feature title; the icon will turn into a green check mark to show that the feature has been enabled.

To disable a feature, click the green check mark to the right of the feature title; the icon will turn into a red **X** icon to show that the feature has been disabled. The following screenshot shows the first feature option with the drop-down description and a red **X** icon next to it, indicating the feature is disabled:

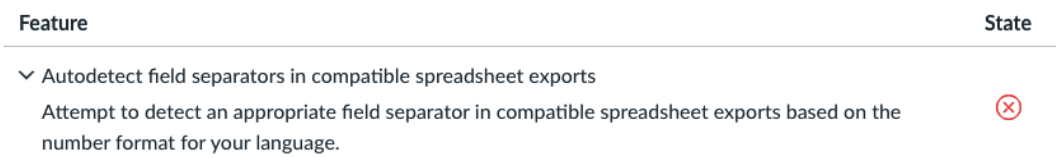


Figure 1.13 – Feature example

Next, let's discuss how to customize your notification preferences to ensure that you know when important things have happened in Canvas.

Customizing your notification preferences

Adjusting your notification preferences is one of the most important things you must know how to do when you're getting started with Canvas. The same goes for your students – not being notified of an announcement or a direct message could mean missing an online meeting or assignment if their notification preferences have not been adjusted appropriately.

To access your notification settings, click on **Account** on the left Global Navigation menu, then click on **Notifications** at the top of that menu.

The **Notifications** page allows you to adjust the following:

- What activity you receive notifications about (for example, due dates, inbox messages, or announcements)
- How you will receive notifications (for example, via email, text message, or Twitter)
- When you will receive notifications (for example, immediately, daily, weekly, or never)

When you open the **Notifications** page, you will see a spreadsheet-like grid, as shown in the following screenshot, which lists the course activities you can be notified about in the left column and the method of notification along the top row:

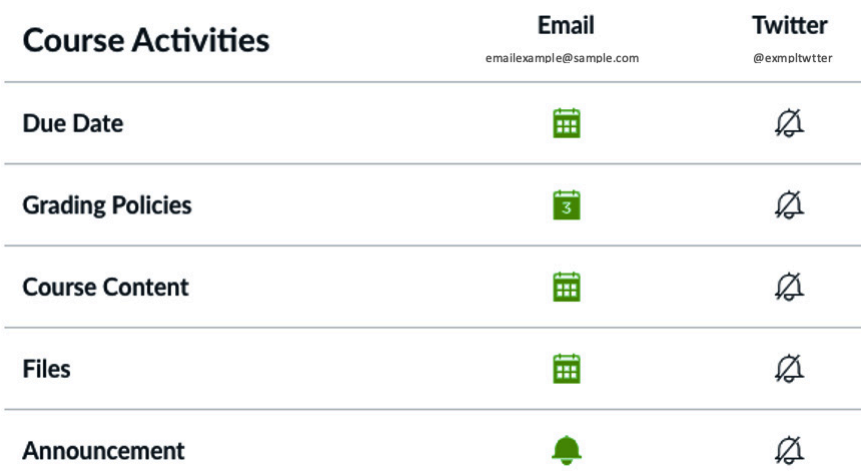


Figure 1.14 – Course activities and notification methods

The methods of notification along the top come from the contact information and registered services that you have configured in your settings. In the center of the grid, you will see the different frequency icons displayed in the cross sections of course activities and contact methods. If you click on any of these icons, a drop-down menu will appear, where you can select one of the four options for how frequently Canvas will notify you about the selected activity.

To adjust your notification preferences, perform the following steps:

1. Locate the course activity you would like to be notified about on the left-hand side of the table.
2. Find the contact method on the top row you would like to use to be notified about that activity.
3. Within the grid, click on the notification icon and select one of the four notification icon options to set the notification frequency. For example, the following screenshot displays the configuration for sending a **Daily Summary** to an **Email Address** for any changes that are made to a **Due Date** for an activity:

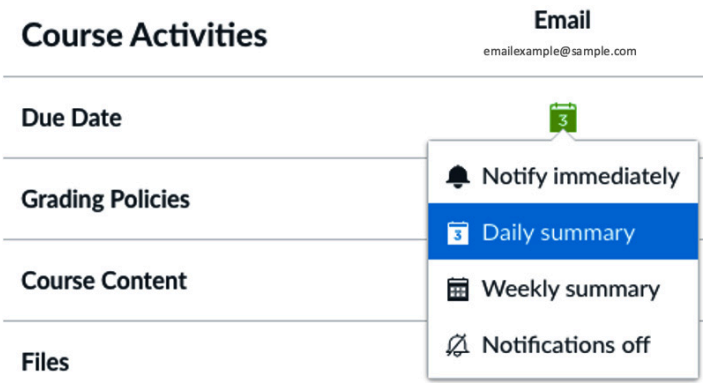


Figure 1.15 – Configuration to receive daily summaries via email for any due date changes

4. Go through each type of course activity and select the contact method and frequency of notifications that will work best for you.
5. Your notification preferences are automatically saved whenever you click on the frequency icons.

As you become more familiar with Canvas and begin participating in courses, you may decide to return to your notification settings once you have a better idea of your needs and preferences.

Now that we've covered all the basics of setting up your profile, adjusting your settings, and customizing your notification preferences, let's get started with creating your course!

Creating your Canvas course

As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, your Canvas account will fall under the umbrella of an institutional instance of Canvas or a **Free for Teachers** instance of Canvas. Creating a course is different for both instances of Canvas, and you may find that your specific institution's Canvas situation might be a combination of both, depending on how your school has chosen to integrate Canvas with its other systems. As always, if you are using an institutional instance of Canvas, consult the guidance and instructions from your school, in addition to the information provided in this book.

To begin, let's start with how to access a new, empty course if it has been set up by your institution's IT or administrative department in an institutional instance of Canvas.

Joining a course created by your institution

If your school uses Canvas as its LMS, you will mostly likely not be responsible for the initial creation of your Canvas course. In fact, you may not even have the ability to create your own Canvas course. Often, the IT or administrative department will create all your courses automatically when they add the course to the school's course registration system.

Typically, when courses are created in Canvas automatically in conjunction with your school's course registration system, you will be automatically added to those courses as the teacher. In this case, your courses will automatically appear under the **Classes** option of the left Global Navigation menu when you log into Canvas, without any action required on your part.

Alternately, if your IT team manually creates your course, you will receive an email, inviting you to join the course. Once the IT or administrative teams have manually created your course, you will receive an email, informing you that you have been invited to participate in the course as a teacher. From there, you should click on the link in the email and follow the on-screen instructions to **Accept** the course invitation. The course should then appear under the **Classes** option of the left Global Navigation menu when you log into Canvas.

If you are not using Canvas through an institution, you will need to create a course manually using your **Free for Teachers** account.

Creating a new course with a Free for Teachers account

If you are using the **Free for Teachers** instance of Canvas, you can create a new course from your **Dashboard**. For institutional users, you may also have this option, depending on how your IT team has configured Canvas. To create a new course, complete the following steps:

1. Navigate to the **Dashboard** section via the left Global Navigation menu.
2. On the right sidebar menu, click on the **Start a New Course** button:

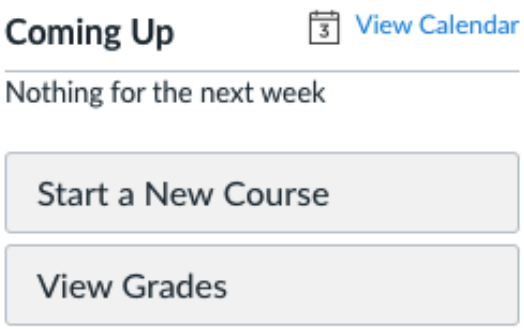


Figure 1.16 – Start a New Course button

3. From there, a pop-up window will appear, where you can enter your **Course Name**, a **Short Name** for the course, and options for choosing a **Content License** for your course. You can indicate whether you would like the course content to be **Private (Copyrighted)**, in the **Public Domain** area, or publicly accessible through your choice of various **Creative Commons Licenses**. For more information on Creative Commons licenses, you can visit `https://creativecommons.org/`.
4. Once you have entered all the information for your course, click on **Create course**:

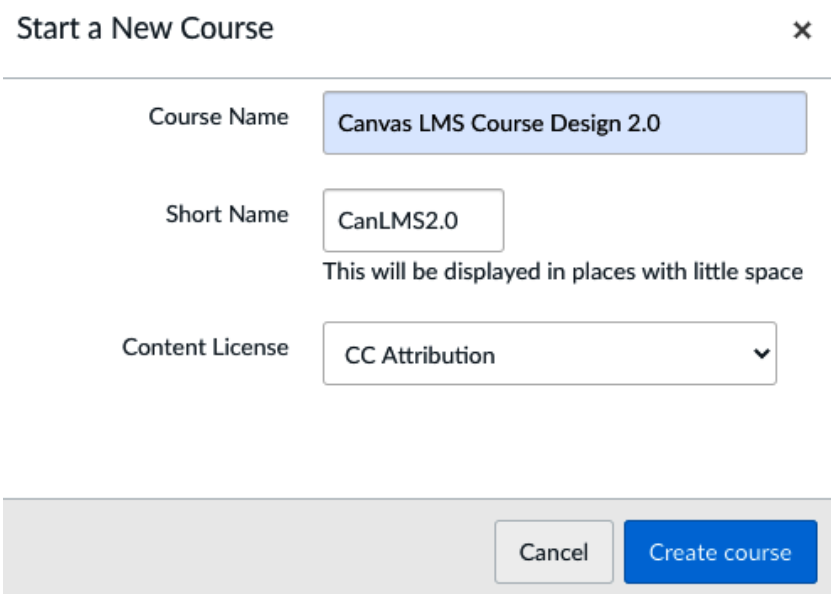


Figure 1.17 – Creating a new course

With that, your course has been created! Once you click on **Create course**, you will be taken to the home page of your new course. You'll notice that the course layout is similar to what you saw while you were editing your account settings. We will go over how to navigate your course in more detail throughout the rest of this book, but please take note of the following:

- The left Global Navigation menu is still visible and unchanged.
- The right Sidebar menu is still visible and contains **Course Status** updates and a course checklist for setting up your course.
- A Course Navigation menu, on the left, shows links to specific activities that are available within the course.
- The center of the screen displays the content of the course's home page.

When you create your course, it will remain **Unpublished** until you choose to **Publish** it. When a course is unpublished, only teachers, designers, and **Teacher's Assistants** (**TAs**) that have been added to the course will be able to access the course's content. Once the course has been published, the students in the course will be able to access the course content. You will see your **Course Status** displayed in the right sidebar menu:

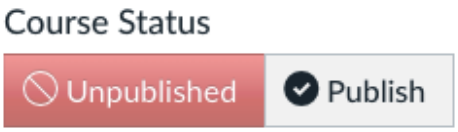


Figure 1.18 – Unpublished course status

It is up to you when you wish to officially publish your course and allow all participants to access its content. Later in this book, we will cover how to control exactly what participants can see within your course once it has been published, but at this point, it is probably best to wait until you have finished designing your course before officially publishing it. Keep in mind that a course cannot be unpublished once a student has submitted a graded assignment.

Now that you have created your first course, you can begin building the course by adding and organizing content in the coming chapters.

Summary

At the beginning of this chapter, we discussed the different instances of Canvas you might encounter. We discussed how to set up and access an institutional instance of Canvas and create an account to access the **Free for Teachers** instance of Canvas. Then, we moved on to logging in and navigating the layout of Canvas through the left Global Navigation menu, the center content area, and the right sidebar menu.

Next, we covered how to edit your profile by updating your name, pronouns, title, biography, and links, as well as adding a profile picture. From there, we learned how to adjust your account settings, including contact information, your full/display/sortable name, pronouns, preferred language, time zone, and how to change your password. Next, we covered how to link registered services to your accounts such as Google Docs, Twitter, and Skype, and we then reviewed **Approved Integrations** and their available **Features**.

After that, we explored the notification preferences that Canvas allows you to customize. At the end of this chapter, we learned how to create a course, both from the perspective of an institutional user and a **Free for Teachers** user.

As we move forward into *Chapter 2*, *Building Your Canvas Course*, we will dive into adding content to your course and learn how to tailor your Canvas course to meet your needs and the needs of your students.

2
Building Your Canvas Course

This chapter will cover the foundations of building your Canvas course by creating the content your students will interact with during your course. We will start by discussing some of the important ideas to keep in mind when planning your course and conceptualizing how you will use Canvas for your unique situation. After this, we will learn how to import content from another course on Canvas or from another **Learning Management System** (**LMS**).

Next, we will work through how to add **assignments** and content to your course, specifically focusing on how to use the **Rich Content Editor**. We will then learn how to create **discussions** and **quizzes** within Canvas, and we will cover how to create **assignment groups** for weighted assignments.

In this chapter, we will cover the following topics:

- Planning how you will use Canvas to deliver your course activities and content
- Importing content from another Canvas course or another LMS
- Creating assignments and using the Rich Content Editor
- Creating discussions and quizzes
- Creating assignment groups for weighted assignments

Technical requirements

To complete this chapter, you will need the following:

- A computer with internet access
- A Canvas account (see *Chapter 1*, *Getting Started with Canvas*)
- An empty Canvas course (see *Chapter 1*, *Getting Started with Canvas*)
- Course materials and content

Planning your course – from syllabus to screen

As you think about how to build and organize your Canvas course, there are a number of topics to consider that will impact the way you will use Canvas to manage your course content. The following questions and prompts will help you determine the approaches you might consider while building your course.

What kind of course am I teaching?

- A traditional, in-person course
- A fully online course with most or all of the activities to be completed asynchronously
- A live course with online expectations (for example, assignment submissions, discussion board postings, video assignments, and peer reviews)
- A hybrid course with a combination of in-person, synchronous remote students, and/or asynchronous remote students

What do I need to do to get the course content into a format that is suitable for Canvas?

- The course is brand new. I have not taught the course before in any format, so I need to find and sequence the course content before I begin building my Canvas course.
- I have taught the course previously as a traditional, in-person course. The content is already organized in a syllabus, so the bulk of my work will be adapting activities and resources to an online format for my Canvas course.
- I have taught the course previously as an online course using another LMS. The content is already organized in a syllabus and I have all of the content in an electronic format. I need to import and organize the course content into Canvas.
- I have taught the course previously, either in-person or online, using another LMS. The content is already organized in a syllabus, so I will need to adapt activities and resources to an online format and/or import the course content from another LMS.

What purpose will Canvas serve in the day-to-day life of my course?

- Canvas will be a supplement to the in-person classes where students can access the assigned content and communicate with their peers and me.
- Canvas will be the sole platform for a fully online course. Students will interact with all of the content, other students, and me via Canvas.
- Canvas will facilitate a variety of in-person and online activities in addition to housing supplementary content and streamlining communication.

How will students interact with Canvas?

- Students will use Canvas as a supplement to the in-person course in which they are participating. They will have access to a hard copy of everything they need in class, but they can also access the material on Canvas. They will check Canvas to see their grades for the various assignments that they will turn in to me during class.
- Students will use Canvas to participate in an online course. They will access the course content, submit assignments electronically, and communicate primarily through Canvas.
- Students will use Canvas for the administrative aspects of their in-person course. They will access content via Canvas, and they may have the option to complete activities and submit assignments in class or through Canvas.

How will I interact with Canvas?

- I will post the material we cover in class on Canvas for students to access remotely (for example, the course syllabus, in-class presentations, class notes, readings, and assignment instructions). I will post grades to Canvas, and I may communicate comments and feedback in person or through Canvas.
- I will teach the entire course using Canvas. I will post content for students to explore, facilitate online instruction, collect, and grade assignments, and communicate feedback to students via Canvas.
- I will use the features of Canvas to enhance the experiences that students have during class. I will post core and supplemental content, links to third-party apps, create assignments for electronic submission, and communicate with students via Canvas in addition to face-to-face interactions.

Your answers to these questions will vary depending on your situation, and the options listed in the preceding points are only common suggestions; you may have any combination of the preceding situations present in your workload. A vital aspect of successfully utilizing the capabilities of Canvas is determining what your needs are; once you determine what you need to accomplish, you can use this book to help yourself meet your goals.

If you are using Canvas to teach a course that you have taught in the past with an existing syllabus, what you already have is a great place to start. Think about the sequence of the content, the various types of projects and assignments, as well as the assessment and grading strategies you have used. Canvas can play as large or small a role as you need for any of these elements of your syllabus based on your answers to the preceding questions.

As an example, let's discuss adapting activities and resources to an online format. If you need to obtain electronic versions of resources you use in your classes, check the copyright laws regarding the educational use of materials for your country. In some cases, you may be able to scan content and upload it so students have instant access to the content directly through Canvas. You can then sequence the content within Canvas so students access it in the order you desire. Alternatively, you can have your students purchase e-book or hard copy editions of your chosen textbooks.

Canvas has many features that can allow you to adapt and restructure traditional live activities, including discussions, critiques, peer reviews, or collaborations into an online format. You may also have or be able to find a variety of online resources and interactive activities to integrate into your Canvas course. As you become more familiar with the capabilities of Canvas in the coming chapters, you will gain a better understanding of how you can utilize the features of Canvas for your course. However, the more planning you put into your course before you start building it, the more effective your use of Canvas is likely to be.

As more and more schools have adopted and begun to use LMSs in recent years, you have probably encountered another LMS in the time you've been an educator. You may have taught courses using these other systems in the past. If that's the case, the following section will help you import content from your previous courses in other systems into Canvas. If you are building your course from scratch or have not used another LMS when teaching your course previously, you are welcome to skip to the following sections on adding assignments and other content to your course.

Importing content from another course

If you would like to import content from another LMS or Canvas course, the design of Canvas makes it quite easy to do so. When you open your newly created course (remember that it's listed under **Courses** on the left Global Navigation menu), you will be taken to the home page of your new course. On the left, you will see the Course Navigation menu with a variety of pages, and on the right, you will see the **Course Status** indicating that your course is unpublished. Below this status are several options listed for setting up your course, as shown in the following screenshot:

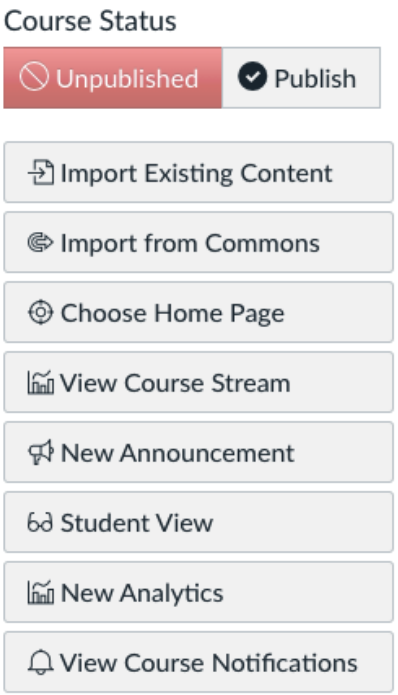


Figure 2.1 – Course Status and a list of setup options

This list of options can serve as a helpful guide that ensures that all of the essential elements of your course are up and running before you publish the course and allow students to access the content.

The first step in importing content from another Canvas course or LMS is to export or extract that content from its original host site. Exporting content is different for every LMS, but the option to export an entire course is usually found in the course settings. Consult your IT department or the technology support for the host site if you need help exporting. We will cover how to export a course from Canvas in *Chapter 8*, *Now You're Ready!*, once we have finished building your course.

To import content into your course, complete the following steps:

1. Export your course content from its original host site, and then make sure that you save the exported file to an easily accessible location on your computer (for example, your Desktop or your Documents folder).

> **Important note**
>
> One of the most common file formats for an exported course is the `.zip` file format. Files with a `.zip` extension contain a file or group of files that have been compressed for easy transportation between programs or devices. Think of it as a suitcase; rather than transporting four outfits individually for a trip, you zip them all together in a suitcase for easy transportation.

2. Navigate to the home page of your course and click on **Import Existing Content** on the right Sidebar menu, as shown in the following screenshot:

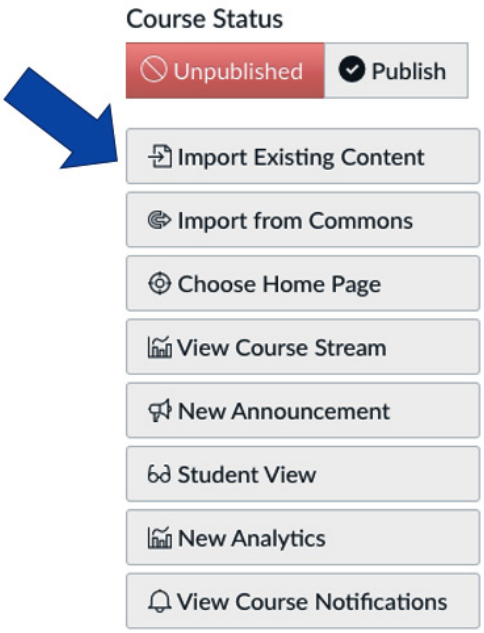


Figure 2.2 – Import Existing Content button

3. On the page that appears, you will see the **Import Content** heading with a drop-down menu next to **Content Type**. From the drop-down menu, choose the type of content you would like to import by selecting the file type and management system you have used in the past. For example, if you have an exported course from Blackboard or Moodle, choose the option that corresponds to the LMS with which you have created the course export file. The following screenshot displays the options you may choose from:

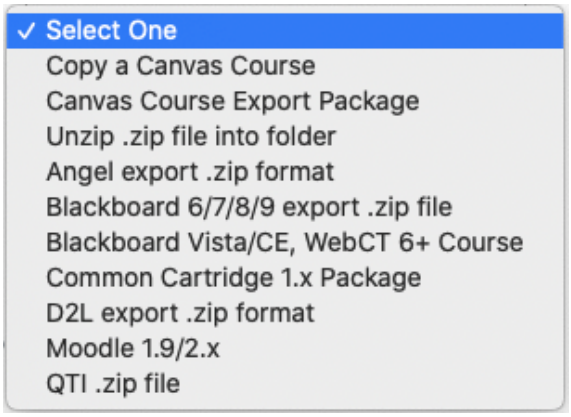


Figure 2.3 – Content Type options

4. Once you have selected your **Content Type**, options will appear that will guide you through uploading your content bundle.

   Follow the instructions that appear for the type of content you are importing and check any relevant adjustment options. In most cases, you will see an option to upload the content bundle from your computer.

5. Select the appropriate content bundle file from your computer. You may see other options appear below the **Content Type** drop-down menu that include the ability to adjust the course's start and end dates or the assignment due dates. Select these options if you wish and enter the appropriate dates. You may also see options to select specific content that you would like to import to Canvas; check this option if you wish to upload only certain sections or files from your previous course.

6. Once you have selected the content bundle file to import and have selected the desired adjustment options, click on **Import**. From there, you will see your course import appear under **Current Jobs** at the bottom of the import screen.

7. You will see a progress bar appear, and once your import is finished, you will be able to see that the import is complete and you can navigate back to the course's home page.

On the Course Navigation menu on the left, you can click through the navigation links to explore the content that has been imported. The **Assignments** or **Files** pages are the most common places for the imported content to appear, so feel free to click on those links to explore where your content has been imported.

> **Note**
>
> It is important to go through your imported course content carefully once your import has finished, especially if you are importing course content from different LMSs. You should ensure, for example, that all content is in the location you want, all due dates are set appropriately, and certain content is published (or unpublished) based on your needs for the start of your course.

The following sections will cover how to add to, adjust, modify, rearrange, or delete the content that you have now successfully imported. We'll begin by looking at how to create and edit a new assignment within Canvas, which will teach you many of the skills needed to update any content you may have imported.

Creating assignments

The bulk of building a course in Canvas is creating your activities and setting up the grading preferences to accurately reflect the expectations for your course. As we discussed, the more planning that goes into your course before you begin building it, the easier it will be for you to assemble your course. Once you have developed your syllabus, identify the assignments and grading policies you would like to put into action for your course. When you have developed the graded content for your course in the abstract, you can begin building each assignment within your Canvas course.

While there are several different types of activities you can create with Canvas, let's start by exploring how to add assignments.

Adding an assignment

The following section will walk you through creating assignments for your course. As we work through the options available to you, you will learn the variety of purposes the assignments may serve within your course. To create your first assignment, perform the following steps:

1. Open the **Assignments** page of your course on the left Course Navigation menu.
2. This will bring you to the assignment list for your course, which you will notice is empty (unless you have imported assignments from another course or LMS). Click on the **+ Assignment** icon in the top-right corner to begin creating your first assignment, as seen in the following screenshot:



Figure 2.4 – Adding an assignment using the + Assignment button

3. This will bring you to a new assignment page, which includes options to **Name** your assignment and type instructions/requirements for the assignment. You can go ahead and name your first assignment and then type or paste your instructions/requirements into the textbox. Above the textbox, you will notice the various formatting and embedding options of the Rich Content Editor, which we will discuss further in the *Rich Content Editor* section later in this chapter.
4. Once you have entered the name and instructions/requirements for your assignment, you will see options below to set the number of **Points** for your assignment. Go ahead and enter the number of points you would like to use for the assignment.
5. Below the **Points** option is the ability to designate the **Assignment Group**. For now, leave this option on **Assignments** (which displays as the default option). We will learn how to set up assignment groups in the final sections of this chapter.

6. Below the **Assignment Group** option is a drop-down to **Display Grade as** your desired type of grade. You can choose your preferred grading type from the options shown in the following screenshot:

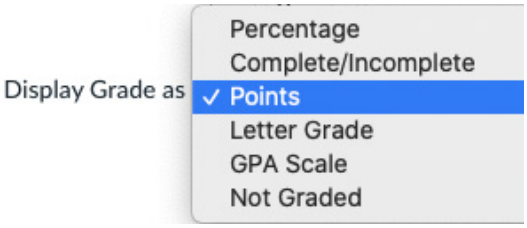


Figure 2.5 – Grading type options

7. Below the **Display Grade as** drop-down, you are able to indicate how students will submit their work in the **Submission Type** section.

   The top of this section includes a drop-down with the options shown in the following screenshot:

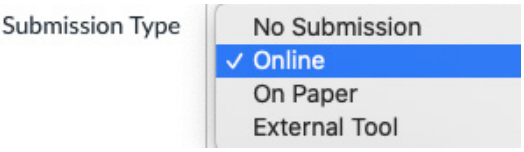


Figure 2.6 – Submission Type options

   Choose **No Submission** if students will not need to submit work to you (for example, if you will be grading an in-class activity such as a presentation, group discussion, or debate).

   Choose **Online** if you want students to submit their work to you through Canvas. Choosing this submission type will display several other checkbox options that allow you to choose what students are able to submit.

   Check the **Text Entry** checkbox if you want students to be able to type their work directly into Canvas to submit.

   Check the **Website URL** checkbox if you want students to be able to share a link to a website as their submission.

   Check the **Media Recordings** checkbox if you want students to be able to make an audio or video recording as their submission.

Check the **File Uploads** checkbox if you want students to be able to upload a file as their submission. The **File Uploads** option also allows you to **Restrict Upload File Types** so you can limit the types of files students can upload (for example, you can limit submissions to `.pdf` or `.docx` files if you do not want students to upload a video or audio file as their submission). You can select as many of these options as you wish depending on the types of content you want students to be able to submit.

Choose **On Paper** if you want students to submit their work to you physically.

Choose **External Tool** if you want to connect an external tool that is configured with Basic LTI. We will discuss integrations such as this further in *Chapter 6*, *Utilizing and Integrating Apps*.

8. Below the **Submission Type** option is a drop-down to allow unlimited or limited **Submission Attempts**. If you select **Limited**, you can adjust how many times you will permit students to submit work for this assignment, as shown in the following screenshot. If you select **Unlimited**, students will be able to submit as many times as they want:

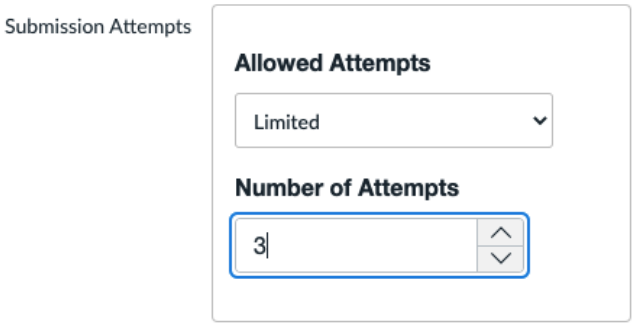


Figure 2.7 – Submission Attempts limited to three attempts

9. Below the **Submission Attempts** option, you will see the option to make the assignment a **Group Assignment**. If you click on the checkbox next to **This is a Group Assignment**, a pop-up window will appear that will allow you to create a set of groups for the assignment, specify how you would like to form the groups, and decide how you would like to structure each group. The following screenshot shows you the options available in the pop-up window:

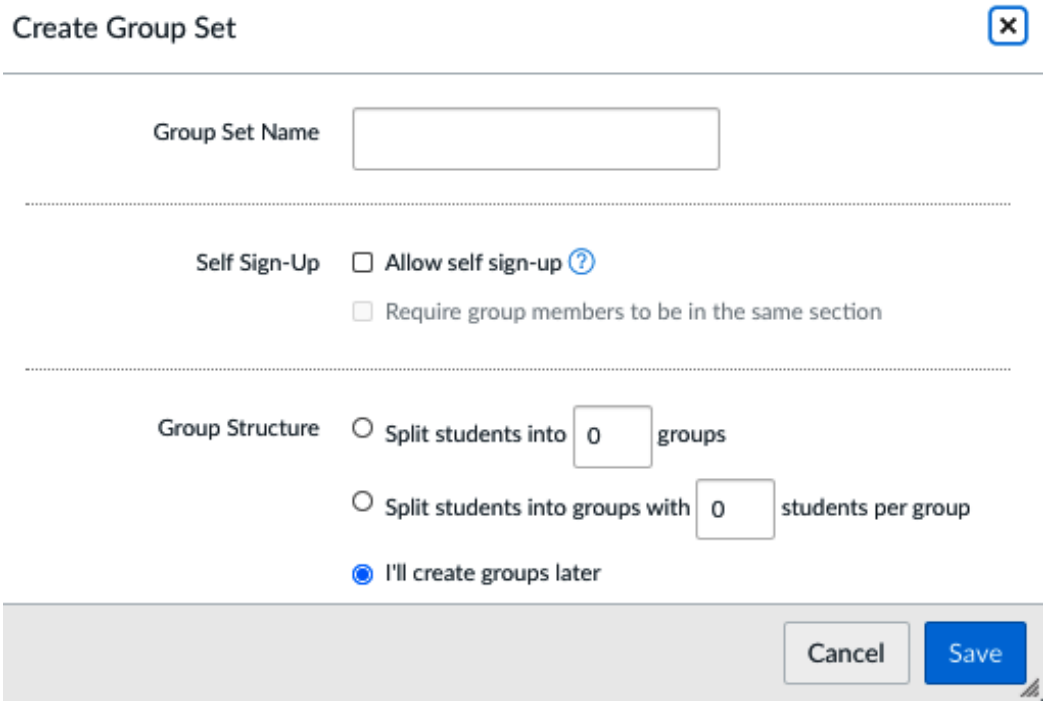


Figure 2.8 – Group assignment options

Once you have entered **Group Set Name**, decided whether students can sign-up for groups using the **Self Sign-Up** option, and selected **Group Structure** and completed any additional settings that appear, click **Save**. When the pop-up window is closed, you will see an **Assign Grades to Each Student Individually** checkbox. You can check or uncheck this box at will—check this box if you would like to assign individual grades or leave it unchecked to assign the same grade to all students in a group.

10. Below the **Group Assignment** checkbox is a checkbox to require **Peer Reviews**. If you would like to require students to review their peers' work, you can check the box next to **Require Peer Reviews**. When you check the peer review box, you will see the **Manually Assign Peer Reviews** or **Automatically Assign Peer Reviews** options. For manual peer reviews, you will receive a notification to assign a peer reviewer to each assignment as it is submitted. Alternatively, you can set up the assignment so that Canvas automatically makes peer assignments at the time of submission. You can also make reviews anonymous by checking off the box next to **Peer Reviews Appear Anonymously**.
11. Below the **Peer Reviews** checkbox, you can choose to enable **Anonymous Grading** by checking the checkbox next to **Graders cannot view student names**. This feature may be helpful in encouraging fairness and consistency in grading or for classes with teaching assistants who may be grading student work. You will notice that anonymous grading is not available for group assignments, only for individual assignments.

12. The final settings section of the assignment allows you to choose when and to whom you will **Assign** the work. You can choose to give the assignment to everyone in a class, to sections of a class, or to specific students within a class. You can set the **Due** date and indicate the dates when the assignment will be **Available from** to students. Students will still be able to submit late work after the **Due** date you select, but they will not be able to submit work after the final **Available from** date you select has passed. Sample content for these options is shown in the following screenshot:

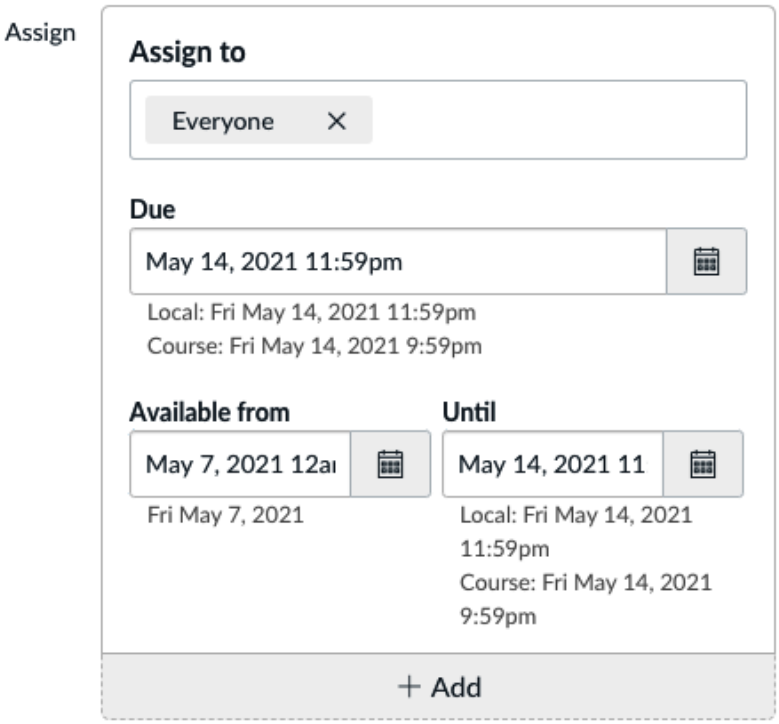


Figure 2.9 – Sample Assign options

13. Once you have entered all of the instructions/requirements for your assignment and selected all of your preferred settings, you can click the **Save** button to create your assignment, or the **Save & Publish** button to create your assignment and make it available to students immediately. For now, let's click **Save** and plan to publish the assignment later on.

After you click **Save**, you have officially created your assignment! This assignment will now show up in the course calendar and in the Gradebook with the due date and assignment settings you have chosen.

> **Note**
>
> Throughout the graded assignments and activities features of Canvas, you may see the words Grade or Mark used interchangeably depending on your language settings and the regional version of English that is selected. Depending on your preference, you may update your language settings as we discussed in *Chapter 1, Getting Started with Canvas*.

Editing an assignment

After you have created your first assignment, you will see the assignment page for your newly created assignment. You can always access this page by clicking **Assignments** on the left Course Navigation menu, and then clicking the title of the assignment. To edit the assignment, click on the **Edit** button at the top-right corner of the assignment page, as shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 2.10 – Edit button on an individual assignment page

This will open the same editing page for your assignment that you used when you created the assignment. You can also edit an assignment by going to the **Assignments** page on the left Course Navigation menu, clicking the three vertical dots icon next to the assignment you want to edit, and selecting **Edit** from the menu that appears, as shown in the following screenshot:

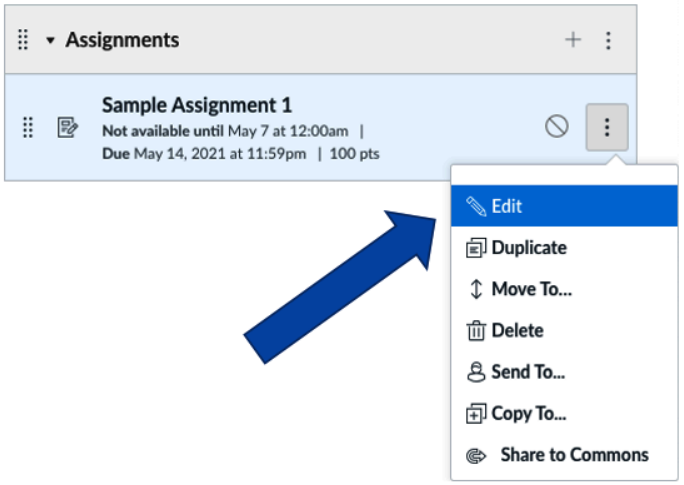


Figure 2.11 – Edit button on the course's Assignments page showing all assignments

In the pop-up window that appears, you can click **More Options** at the bottom to open the same editing page you used to create the assignment.

As mentioned above, when creating or editing an assignment, you have many options to format and embed content using the Rich Content Editor above the textbox on the editing page. This helpful tool also appears throughout Canvas in other places, so let's spend some time familiarizing ourselves with the Rich Content Editor.

Using the Rich Content Editor

The **Rich Content Editor** allows you to customize the formatting and embed additional content into what you are posting. Formatting involves the presentation of the content (for example, the alignment, spacing, indentation, and font color). The Rich Content Editor also allows you to do things such as insert a link, create a table, or upload media content (such as audio or video). If you hover your mouse over the icons in the Rich Content Editor, you will see a description of what each button does.

> **Note**
>
> The following sections discuss most of the main features and tools available in most instances of the Rich Content Editor. If you are using an institutional instance of Canvas, your school may have additional features enabled that may appear on your Rich Content Editor, or some of the functions we are about to discuss may be removed from your Rich Content Editor. You may also have additional features available if you have outside apps integrated into your Canvas account, which we will discuss further in *Chapter 6*, *Using and Integrating Apps*.

As we familiarize ourselves with the Rich Content Editor, either create a new assignment or edit an existing assignment to view the Rich Content Editor above the textbox of the assignment you are viewing. All of the icons and features discussed in the next two sections are also available on the drop-down menu options above the Rich Content Editor that are shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 2.12 – Rich Content Editor drop-down options

Let's look at the options available when you click on each icon shown in the Rich Content Editor.

Basic formatting

The icons along the top- and bottom-right of the Rich Content Editor allow you to adjust the basic formatting of the text you wish to edit, as shown by the brackets in the following screenshot:



Figure 2.13 – Basic formatting tools in the Rich Content Editor

You may be familiar with most of these icons, as they are standard across many text editing and word processing programs. Again, you can hover your mouse over each icon to see a description of what each button will do. These basic formatting options adjust the appearance of the text within the textbox, including options for font size, paragraph style, bold, italics, underline, text color, background color, superscripts, alignment, lists, indents, and clear formatting.

Embedding content

The icons indicated by the brackets in the following screenshot allow you to embed items into the textbox by navigating through the pop-up options that appear when you click on each icon:



Figure 2.14 – Embed content options in the Rich Content Editor

The following sections describe each icon from left to right.

The Links feature

The **Links** feature allows you to insert a hyperlink for an **External Link** that will open a different website in a new tab or window in your web browser, or a **Course Link** that will take the user to another part of your course, such as a content page or assignment. The easiest way to insert an external link is to copy and paste the link into the Rich Content Editor textbox and then hit the spacebar, and it will automatically be converted into a link. Alternatively, you can click on the **Links** icon to add a link or change plain text to a link.

To create an **External Link**, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **Links** icon or click the drop-down arrow next to the **Links** icon and click on **External Link** from the drop-down menu that appears.
2. You will see a pop-up menu with a box at the top to enter the **Text** you would like the link to appear as (for example, **Article to Read** if the link is an article that students should read) and then a box to paste the **Link** you would like users to visit as shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 2.15 – Link to URL feature

3. Once you have entered the text you would like to display and have pasted the web address in the box, click on **Done**. This will display the link you have pasted as a clickable link in the main textbox below the Rich Content Editor.

You can also highlight plain text you have already typed and then click on the **Links** icon to change the plain text to a link. In this case, the selected text will open the web address, but the full URL will not be displayed in the main textbox. This allows you to embed links into written content without interrupting the aesthetic of the written content with a cumbersome web address.

If you would like to link directly to another part of your Canvas course, you can create a **Course Link** by completing the following steps:

1. Click the drop-down arrow next to the **Links** icon and click on **Course Link** from the drop-down menu that appears.
2. On the right side of your screen, a menu will open that lists out all of the linkable content in your course. You can link to several content options, as shown in the following screenshot:

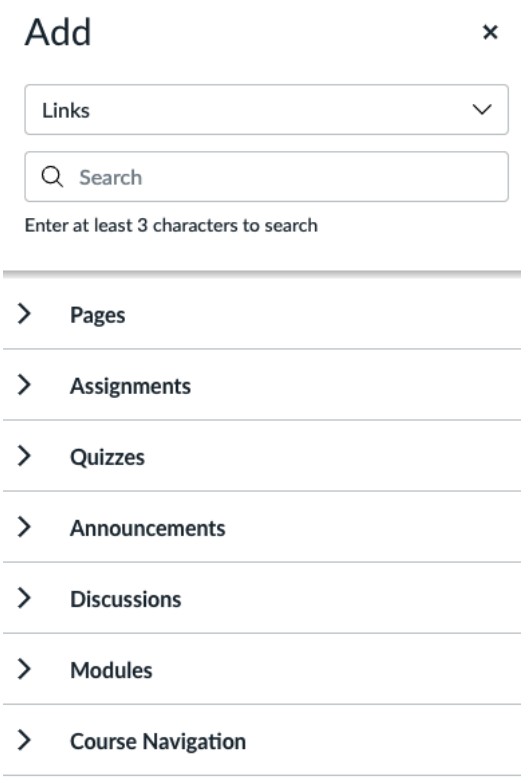


Figure 2.16 – Course Link options

3. Use the search bar at the top or click the drop-down arrow next to each option to view the content or course locations you can link to, select the desired option, and then your link will appear in the main textbox below the Rich Content Editor.
4. If you would like to link to a file you have already uploaded to your course, click the drop-down option next to the **Links** icon, click **Course Links**, and then click on the menu that appears on the right. Click the drop-down option at the top and select **Files** instead of **Links**, as shown in the following screenshot:

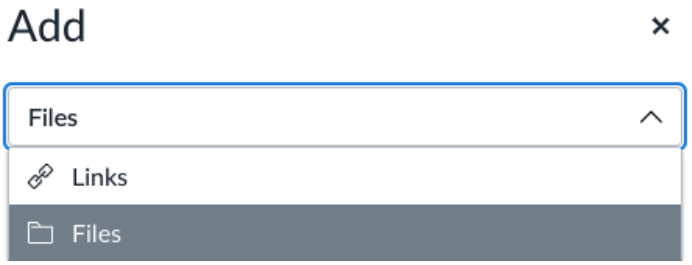


Figure 2.17 – Course link to a file

5. From there, you can search for the filename using the search feature at the top or find the file in your course folders that appear below the search feature. Select the desired option and a link to the file will appear in the main textbox below the Rich Content Editor.

> **Note**
> If you paste the URL to a video hosted on YouTube followed by a space or return, the Rich Content Editor will automatically embed a thumbnail of the video into the textbox. This allows users to click on the thumbnail and watch the video within the assignment or content page rather than opening a new tab or window in the web browser.

Next, let's take a look at the **Images** feature that allows you to embed an image.

The Images feature

The **Images** feature allows you to embed images from a variety of sources into the textbox. When you click on the **Images** icon, you will see a pop-up menu with three tabs at the top – the **Computer**, **Unsplash**, and **URL** tabs. Each of these tabs offers you a way to embed an image.

The **Computer** tab allows you to upload an image from your device. To add an image from your computer, complete the following steps:

1. Click the **Images** icon on the Rich Content Editor.
2. You will see a pop-up window as shown in the following screenshot:

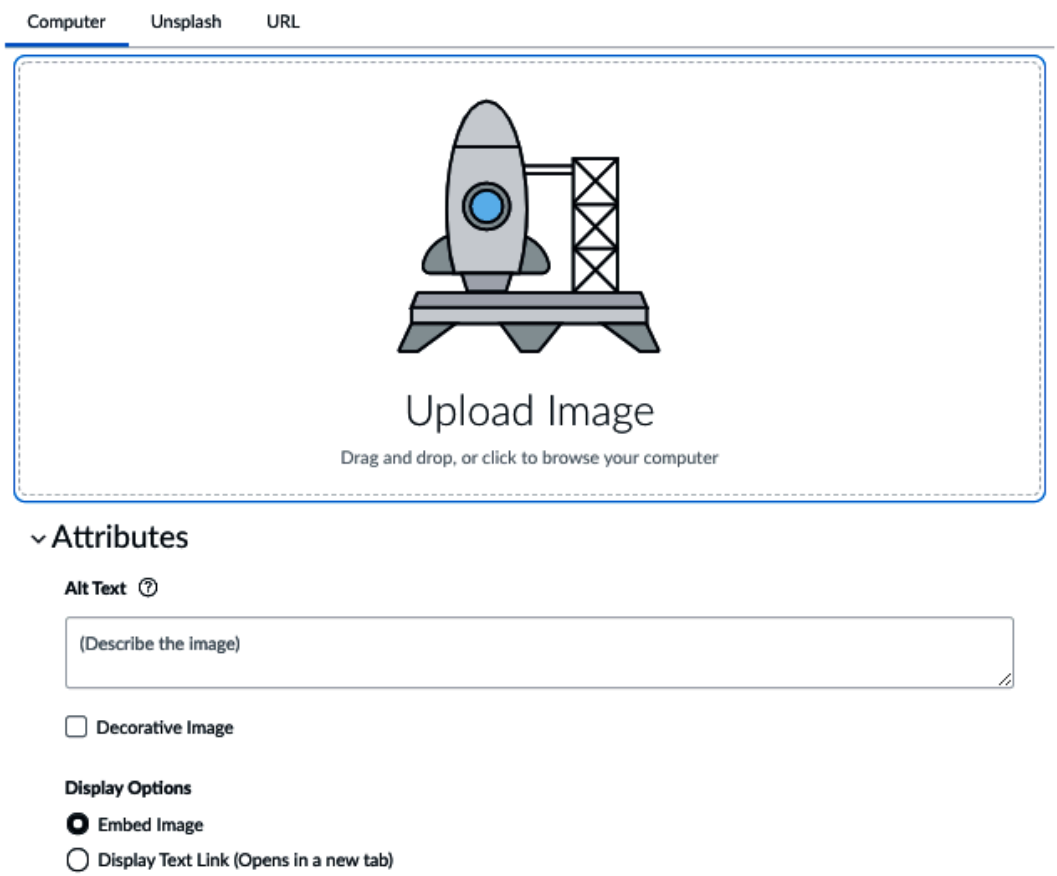


Figure 2.18 – Computer image pop-up window

3. As explained in the pop-up window, you can drag-and-drop an image from your computer to the **Upload Image** area where the spaceship appears, or you can click in the **Upload Image** area to browse your computer to find the image file.
4. Once you have dragged or located the image file you wish to upload, the image will appear in the pop-up window. Below the image, you can set the **Attributes** of the image by providing an **Alt Text** description of the image to ensure accessibility, check the box to indicate if it is a **Decorative Image**, and then select either **Embed Image** in the textbox or **Display Text Link** so that users can open the image in a different tab.
5. Click **Submit** at the bottom of the pop-up, and your image will appear in the main textbox below the Rich Content Editor.

The **Unsplash** tab allows you to search for and embed an image from Unsplash, which is a service that provides high-quality, free stock photos that are available for use. To add an image from Unsplash, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Images** icon on the Rich Content Editor.
2. In the pop-up window that appears, click on the **Unsplash** tab at the top, which is displayed in the following screenshot:

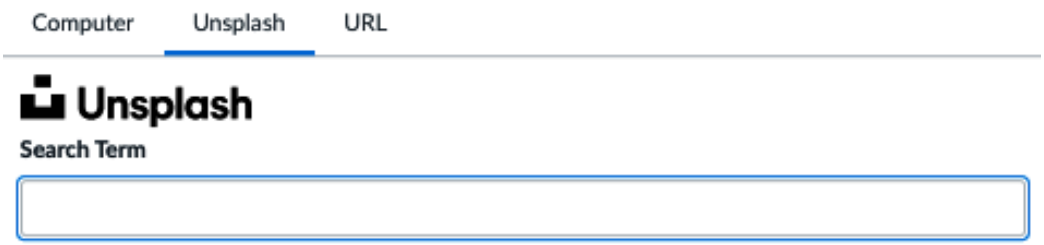


Figure 2.19 – Unsplash image search

3. Use the **Search Term** box to search for images that are available for use through Unsplash. Once you find an image you wish to use, click on it to select it.
4. Once you have selected your image, you can complete the **Attributes** sections below the image as we discussed previously when uploading an image from your computer.
5. Click **Submit** at the bottom of the pop-up, and your image will appear in the main textbox below the Rich Content Editor.

The **URL** tab allows you to paste the URL of an image that already exists online and embed the image. To add an image from a URL, find the direct link to the image online that you want to embed and then perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **Images** icon on the Rich Content Editor.
2. Click on the **URL** tab and paste the link for your image into the **File URL** box at the top, as shown in the following screenshot:

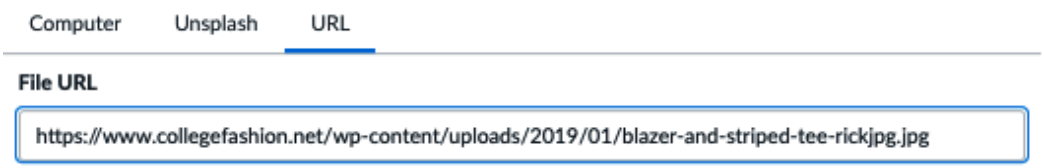


Figure 2.20 – URL image option

3. Complete the **Attributes** sections below the image as we discussed previously when uploading an image from your computer.
4. Click **Submit** at the bottom of the pop-up, and your image will appear in the main textbox below the Rich Content Editor.

In addition to the preceding methods of adding an image just described, you can also add images that you have already uploaded to your course or elsewhere in your Canvas account. To add images in this manner, complete the steps below:

1. Click the drop-down menu next to the **Images** icon on the Rich Content Editor.
2. Choose either **Course Images** to add an image already included elsewhere in your course, or choose **User Images** to add an image already included elsewhere in your Canvas account. This drop-down menu is shown in the following screenshot:

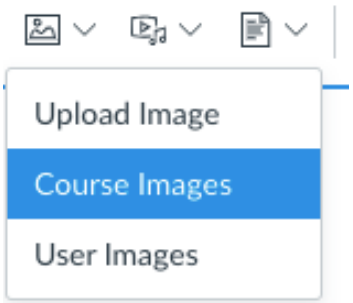


Figure 2.21 – Other image options

3. Each option will open a menu on the right side of your screen that will display all of the images available either from your course or from your account. Choose the image you want to add by clicking on it.
4. The image will be embedded in the main textbox below the Rich Content Editor as soon as you click on it.

The next feature in the Rich Content Editor allows you to record or upload media that will appear in the main textbox below the Rich Content Editor.

The Record/Upload Media feature

The **Record/Upload Media** feature allows you to record or upload audio and video and then embed that media into the textbox. When you click on the Record/Upload Media icon, you will see a pop-up menu with two tabs – the **Computer** and **Record Media** tabs.

If you have media on your computer that you would like to upload to your course, you can do so using the **Computer** tab. To upload and embed video or audio, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **Record/Upload** media icon. The **Computer** tab will be visible in the pop-up window that appears.
2. Similar to our previous discussion of adding an image, you will see a **Drag a file here** area where you can drag an audio or video file from your computer to upload. Alternately, you can click in this area of the screen to browse your device and select media to upload. The **Record/Upload Media** pop-up window is shown in the following screenshot:

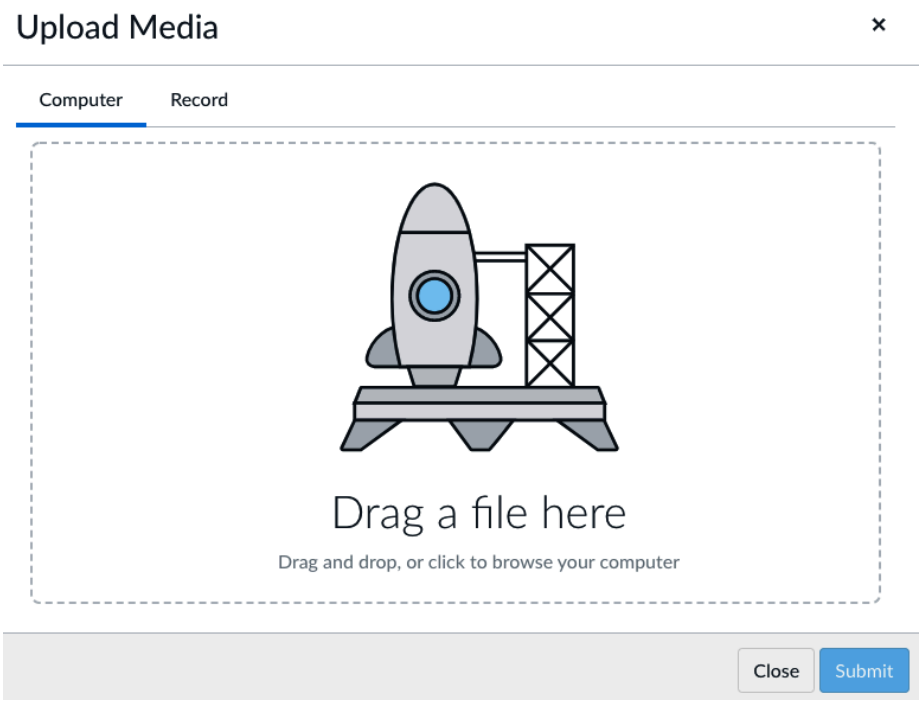


Figure 2.22 – Record/Upload Media pop-up window

3. Once you have dragged the file to the pop-up window or selected the file from your computer, the upload will automatically begin.
4. You can choose to **Add CC/Subtitles**, which will let you upload a file to add subtitles to the media if you have it.
5. Click **Submit** at the bottom of the pop-up and your media will appear in the main textbox below the Rich Content Editor.

If you would prefer to record your own media directly instead of uploading existing media, you can perform the following steps to record and embed a video or audio:

1. Click on the **Record/Upload Media** icon.
2. Click on the **Record** tab at the top of the pop-up window that appears.
3. The first time you use this feature, you may see a pop-up window asking for access to your camera and/or microphone. Click on **Allow** to provide access to use this feature.
4. Once you have provided access to your camera and microphone, the webcam and microphone on your computer will turn on and you will see a preview of your webcam with options to adjust your **Mic** input, to **Start Recording**, or to adjust your **Webcam** input, as shown in the following screenshot:

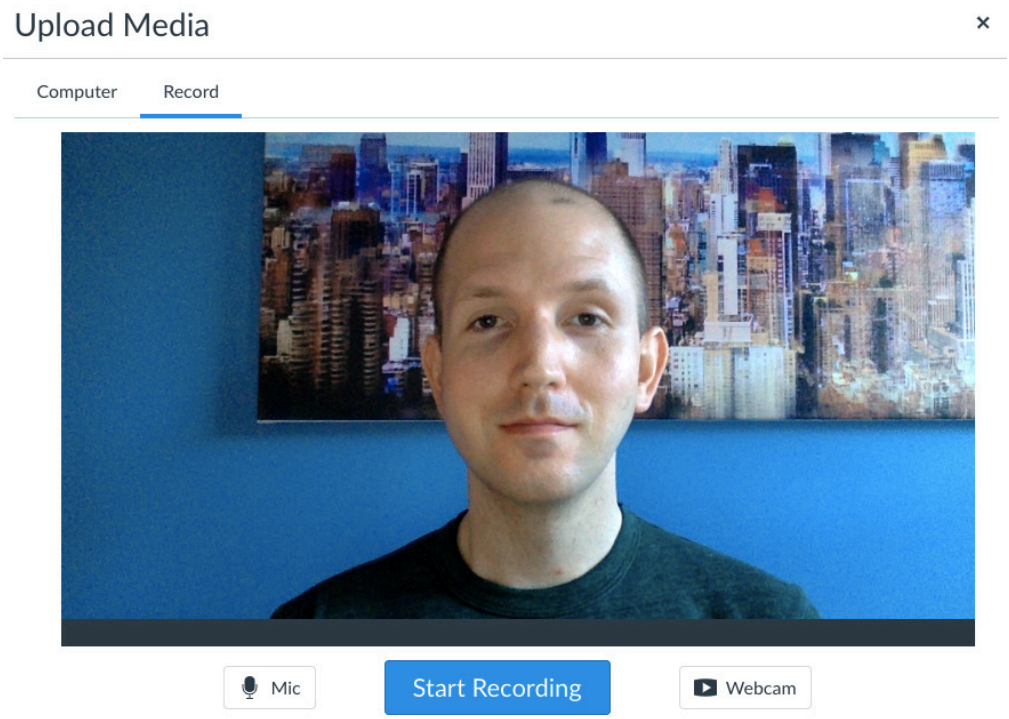


Figure 2.23 – Record media window

5. To record a video, click **Start Recording**, record whatever you would like your video to include, and then click **Finish** to stop recording. You can then click **Save** to embed the video, or **Start Over** to erase and re-record the video. Once you click **Save**, the video will be embedded.

6. To record audio only, click on the **Webcam** button, and then select **No Video** from the drop-down menu. Next, click **Start Recording**, record whatever audio you would like to include, and then click **Finish** to stop recording.

> **Note**
> The Record Media feature is great for short video or audio content. If you would like to provide longer video or audio, it would be better to record that feedback separately and upload the feedback as a file to avoid any time-out errors or time limits that may be in place for the Record Media feature.

7. You can then click **Save** to embed the audio or **Start Over** to erase and re-record the audio. Once you click **Save**, the audio will be embedded.

In addition to uploading or recording media in the ways just described, you can also add media that you have already uploaded to your course or elsewhere in your Canvas account in the same way you could add course or user images. To add media in this manner, complete the following steps:

1. Click the drop-down menu next to the **Record/Upload Media** icon on the Rich Content Editor.
2. Choose either **Course Media** to add media already included elsewhere in your course, or choose **User Media** to add media already included elsewhere in your Canvas account. This drop-down menu is shown in the following screenshot.

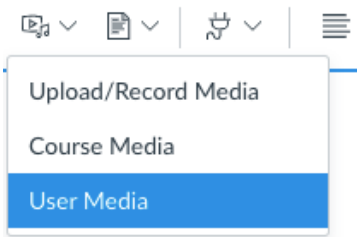


Figure 2.24 – Other media options

3. Each option will open a menu on the right side of your screen that will display all of the media available either from your course or from your account. Choose the media you want to add by clicking on it.
4. The media will be embedded in the main textbox below the Rich Content Editor as soon as you click on it.

The next feature of the Rich Content Editor allows you to upload and embed documents.

The Documents feature

The **Documents** feature allows you to upload a document that users will be able to view or download. To upload a document, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Documents** icon.
2. Similar to our previous discussion of adding images or media, you will see an **Upload File** area where you can drag a file from your computer to upload. Alternatively, you can click in this area of the screen to browse your device and select a document to upload. The **Documents** pop-up window is shown in the following screenshot:

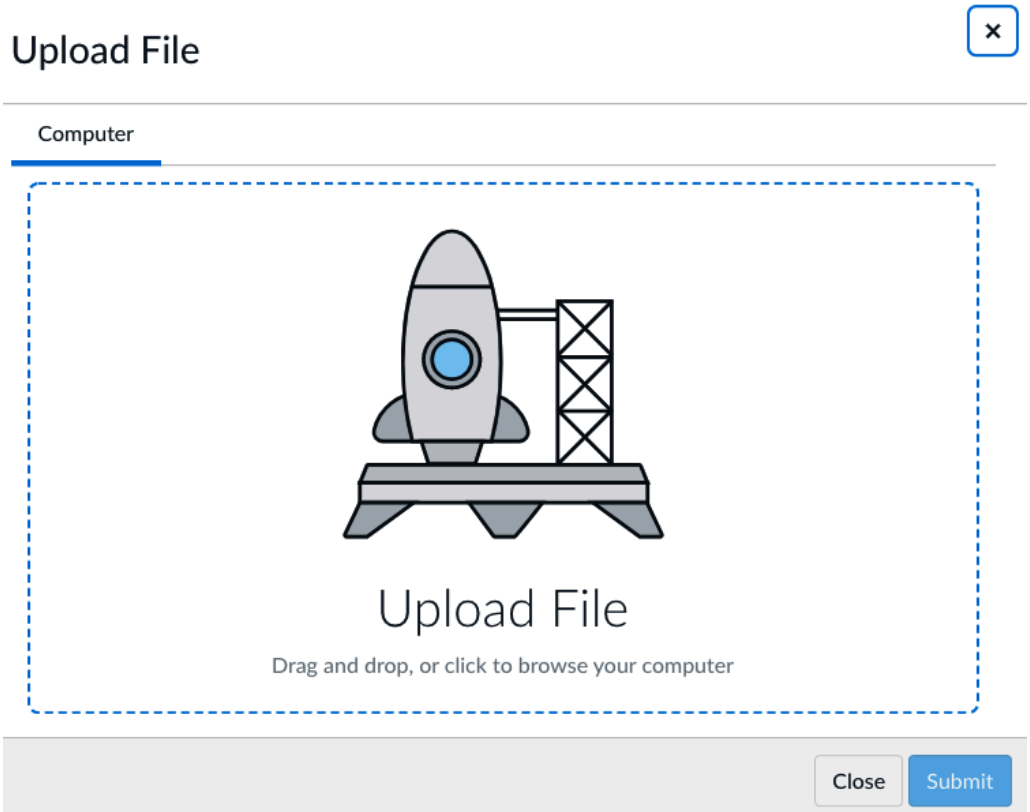


Figure 2.25 – Documents pop-up window

3. Once you have dragged the file to the pop-up window or selected the file from your computer, the upload will begin automatically.
4. Click **Submit** at the bottom of the pop-up and your document will appear as a link in the main textbox below the Rich Content Editor.

5. Once you save the content you have altered using the Rich Content Editor, users will be able to interact with the document you have uploaded. When users click on the document link in the textbox, the file you selected will open in a preview window. Users will also be able to download the file by clicking the down-arrow download icon that appears next to the filename. The following screenshot shows the file preview window and the down-arrow download icon to the right of the filename:

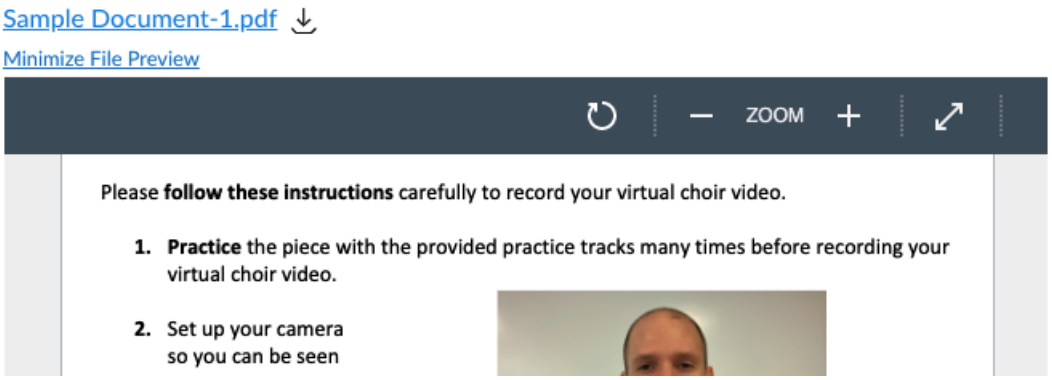


Figure 2.26 – Document preview and download icon

Next, we'll discuss the Apps feature of the Rich Content Editor.

The Apps feature

The **Apps** feature allows you to utilize an integrated app to adjust content on Canvas. We'll discuss integrating various apps in detail in *Chapter 6*, *Utilizing and Integrating Apps*. For now, we'll use the YouTube app as an example since it is readily available in the **Free for Teachers** instance of Canvas.

To add content using the **Apps** feature of the Rich Content Editor, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Apps** icon and select the desired app from the drop-down list that appears. The following screenshot shows the YouTube app as the only app on this drop-down list, though you may have additional apps to choose from:

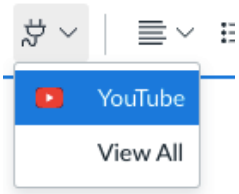


Figure 2.27 – Apps drop-down list

2. Click on the app you want to use. Then, a pop-up window will open with the options available through that app.
3. The YouTube app allows you to search for a video on YouTube and then embed the video directly to Canvas as a link or embed it in varying sizes. The following screenshot shows a searched video with the **Embed Medium** option selected:

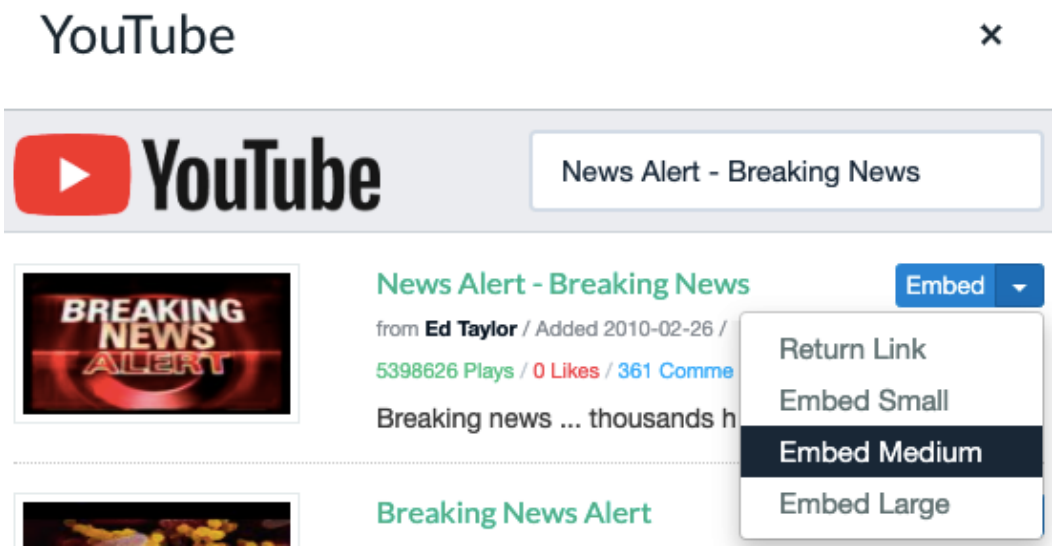


Figure 2.28 – YouTube app example

Each app you have integrated into your Canvas account will provide different functionality, so feel free to experiment with various apps once you become familiar with integrating them in *Chapter 6*, *Utilizing and Integrating Apps*.

The next feature of the Rich Content Editor that we'll explore allows you to insert a **Table**.

The Table feature

The **Table** feature allows you to insert a table, similar to a table you would generate using a spreadsheet program such as Microsoft Excel. To insert a table, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **Table** icon within the Rich Content Editor.
2. From the drop-down menu that appears, select the first option entitled **Table**.

3. You will then be able to select the dimensions of your table by hovering your mouse to highlight the number of rows and columns you want to include. To create the table, click your mouse once you have highlighted the desired dimensions for your table. The following screenshot shows what creating a 4x3 table would look like:

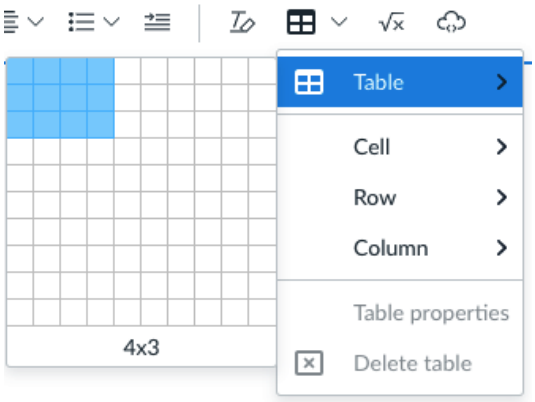


Figure 2.29 – Creating a 3-row by 4-column table using the Rich Content Editor

4. Once you have created the table, you can click into the table to begin adding content. You will notice a menu appear below your table that allows you to edit the layout of your table, as shown in the following screenshot:

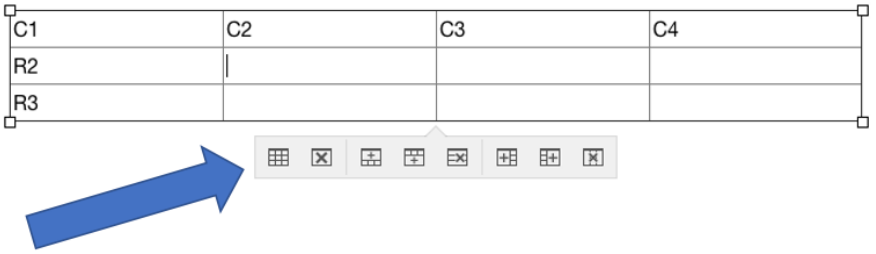


Figure 2.30 – The editing menu for your table

5. Remember you can hover your cursor over any of these icons to see a text description of what the icons will do.
6. Once a table has been created, you can also access these editing options as well as other options to adjust the table's properties by clicking on the table and then clicking on the **Table** icon in the Rich Content Editor.

Now that we've explored the **Table** feature, let's look at the next icon, the **Insert Math Equation** feature.

The Insert Math Equation feature

The **Insert Math Equation** feature allows you to insert a math equation into the textbox. To insert an equation, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **Insert Math Equation** icon, which will open a pop-up menu with seven tabs. Each tab allows you to insert specific mathematical symbols to build basic or complex mathematical equations.
2. To insert a symbol, click on the desired symbol and make any necessary adjustments in the editing box below the symbols menu.
3. If you are familiar with the LaTeX code, you can click on **Switch View to Advanced** to enter or paste the LaTeX code directly.
4. When you have successfully created the desired math equation, click on **Insert Equation** in the bottom-right corner of the pop-up window, as shown in the following screenshot:

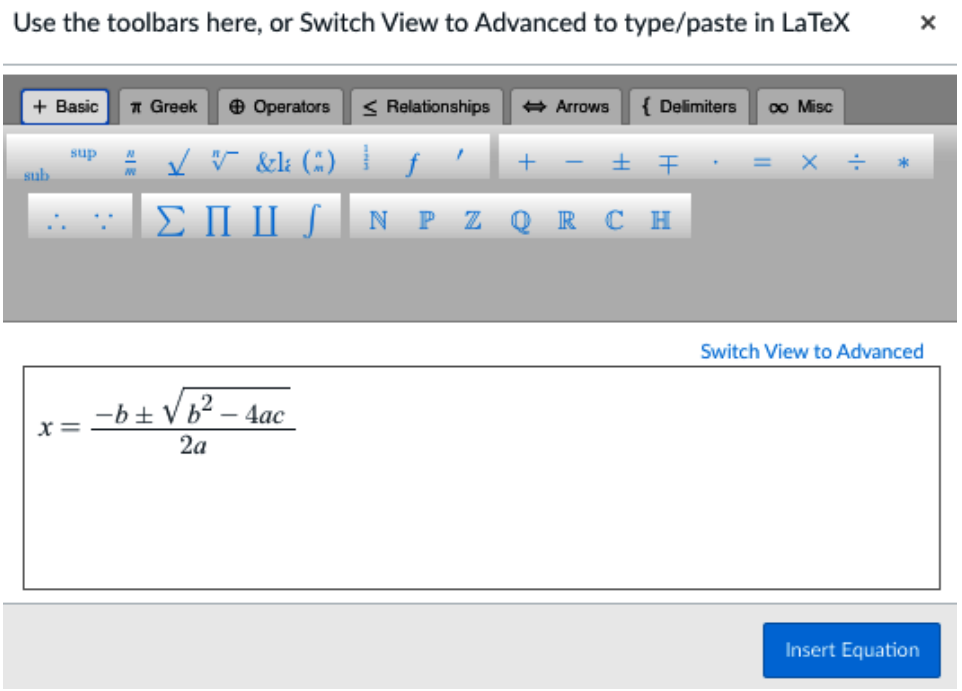


Figure 2.31 – Insert Math Equation feature

The final **Embed** feature of the Rich Content Editor allows you to insert code to embed an item directly.

The Embed feature

The Embed feature allows you to paste code to embed an item directly into the textbox below the Rich Content Editor. This item could be something like a video, widget, or preview window. To embed an item using the Embed feature, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Embed** icon on the Rich Content Editor. A pop-up window will appear.
2. Copy the code for the item you wish to embed from the source of the content you are embedding and then paste it into the **Embed Code** box, as shown in the following screenshot:

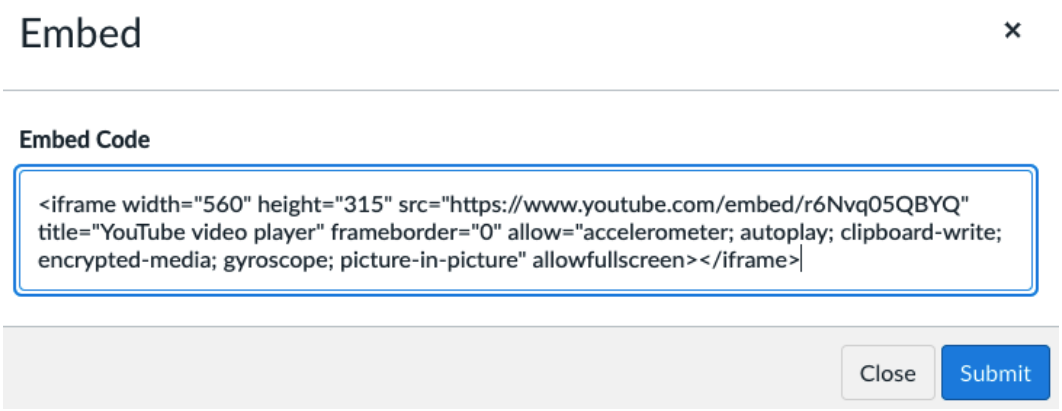


Figure 2.32 – Embed Code pop-up window

3. Click **Submit** and the item will be embedded into the textbox below the Rich Content Editor.

Now that we have covered all of the basic features of the Rich Content Editor, let's briefly discuss the other tools available through the icons underneath the main textbox of the Rich Content Editor.

Additional Rich Content Editor tools

Underneath the main textbox of the Rich Content Editor on the right side, you will find several icons (shown in the following screenshot) that provide some additional information, tools, and options available while you're using the Rich Content Editor:

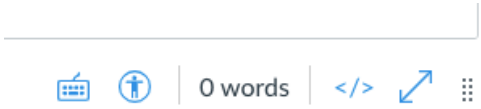


Figure 2.33 – Additional Rich Content Editor tools

1. The first icon allows you to **View keyboard shortcuts** available. This icon opens a pop-up window with a list of shortcuts that could speed up or streamline your use of the Rich Content Editor.
2. The second icon, **Accessibility Checker**, allows you to check the accessibility of the content you have added to ensure that users of all abilities can access and engage with the content. When you click this icon, a pop-up window will appear from the right side of your screen that will either inform you that there are no accessibility issues, or it will prompt you to add or revise information for any content you have included that is not fully accessible. For example, content such as images or tables should have descriptive text so that visually impaired students using assistive technology such as a screen reader can still engage with the content.
3. The third option provides a word count for the content you have added.
4. The following option allows you to **Switch to HTML editor** view so you can edit the HTML code directly. This allows users who are familiar with HTML code to manually adjust and modify the content of their pages.
5. The next option allows you to view the Rich Content Editor in **Fullscreen**, and the final icon allows you to **Resize** the textbox of the Rich Content Editor as you work.

Now that we have covered all of the main features of the Rich Content Editor, you can continue adjusting the content for your first assignment. When you have finished, you'll be ready to learn how to publish an assignment.

Publishing an assignment

When you have finished adding content and adjusting the settings for an assignment, you are ready to publish the assignment. To publish your assignment, perform the following steps:

1. Open the **Assignments** page of your course from the left Course Navigation menu.
2. Find the assignment you wish to publish from the list of assignments. To the right of the assignment name, you will see a gray symbol that looks like a cancel sign that indicates that the assignment is not yet published.

3. Click on the gray cancel sign, and the symbol will turn into a green checkmark icon, indicating the assignment has been published and is now available for students to access, as seen in the following screenshot:

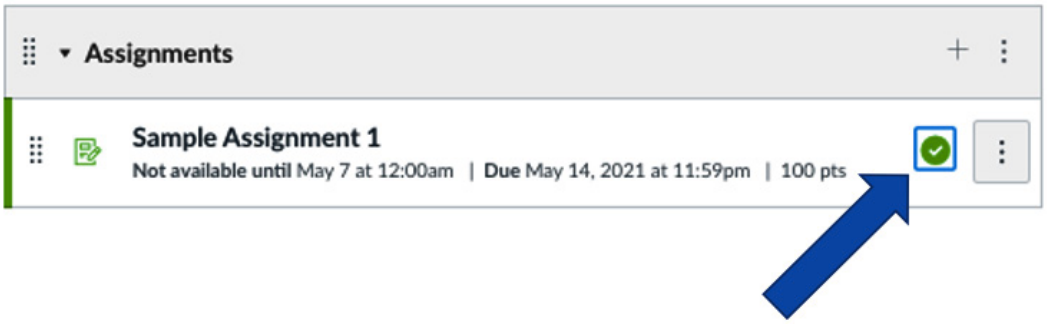


Figure 2.34 – Publish assignment icon

> **Important note**
> If you are editing an assignment after you have published your course, you can check the box at the bottom of the **Edit Assignment** page that reads **Notify users that this content has changed**. This triggers a notification to all users involved with the course that you have edited and updated the assignment.

As we have now covered how to create assignments and how to use the Rich Content Editor, let's move on to other types of activities you can create using Canvas, starting with discussions.

Creating discussions

Just as online forums and posts on social media allow for written interaction between people, the **Discussions** feature of Canvas allows participants to engage with one another in writing. A discussion allows students to submit written comments or other content in reply to a posted topic, and everyone in the course can see and comment on the discussion topics.

You can enable grading for discussion posts, so when students post something on the discussion board, their post appears as their submission for the assignment for you to then view and grade. As the content posted in discussions is generally viewable by everyone in the course, discussions can be a valuable tool for cooperative learning, reflection, building community, and peer review.

Adding a discussion

The following section will walk you through creating discussions for your course. To create a discussion, perform the following steps:

1. Click on **Discussions** on the left Course Navigation menu.
2. In the top-right corner of the **Discussions** page, click on **+ Discussion**, as shown in the following screenshot:

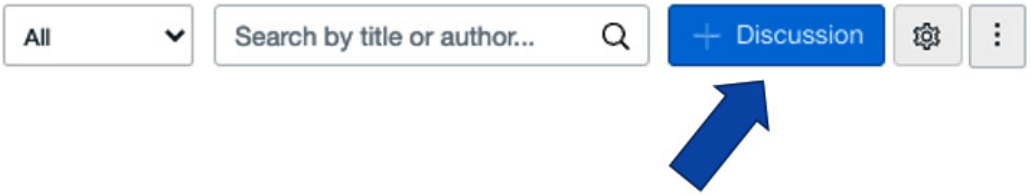


Figure 2.35 – Add Discussion button

3. This will open a new discussion page with a line to add the **Topic Title** with the Rich Content Editor and textbox below. Hopefully, the functionality of this page looks familiar from when we created our first assignment. Enter the content for your discussion topic in the textbox below the Rich Content Editor.
4. You can choose where to post the discussion with the **Post to** option, and you can add an **Attachment** if you want to include a file related to the discussion post.

   Below the textbox, you will see options that allow you to adjust the features of the discussion you're creating.

   Allow threaded replies: This feature allows students to comment on other students' posts within a discussion thread. Allowing threaded replies will enable students to keep the conversation going rather than simply posting one response to the original topic.

   Users must post before seeing replies: This feature allows the posts in a discussion to remain hidden from individual students until each of them has posted a response. You might consider using this feature to encourage originality in students' responses rather than letting students see what other students have already posted before posting their own response.

Enable podcast feed: This feature allows you to let students subscribe to the discussion thread as a podcast, so they will see updates to the discussion thread along with their other podcast updates in Canvas. If you select **Enable podcast feed**, you will see another option, **Include student replies in podcast feed**, which will allow students to see the discussion topic and the posted replies in their podcast feeds. If you enable the podcast feed option, you will see a link to the podcast feed appear on the list of course discussions. Once the course is published, students will be able to click on that link and view the podcast feed for that discussion.

Graded: Checking this box allows you to give students a grade for their contribution to the discussion, and the discussion will appear as an item in the gradebook for the course. Notice that when you check this box, new options appear underneath that mirror the grading options we adjusted when we created our first assignment.

Allow liking: Checking this box allows students to *like* each other's posts in the discussion, similar to the *like* feature on many social media sites. Notice that when you check this box, new options appear underneath that allow you to choose whether students or only graders can like posts as well as whether you want to sort the posts by the number of likes received.

Add to student to-do: If you do not choose to grade your discussion post, checking this box will add the discussion to students' To-do list on Canvas, so they will see a reminder to participate in the discussion even though it is not graded.

5. Once you have finished updating the content and settings for your discussion assignment, you can click **Save** at the bottom of the page or **Save & Publish** if you want the discussion to be visible to students immediately.

Once you have created and published your discussion, you may choose to pin the discussion to the top of the discussion board or close a discussion for comments.

Pinning or closing discussions

Pinning a discussion organizes the discussion board so your students will see **Pinned Discussions** listed first whenever they view the discussion board. Closing a discussion for comments prevents students from contributing to discussions that are **Closed for Comments**. To pin a discussion or close a discussion for comments, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **Discussions** tab on the left Course Navigation menu.
2. Find the discussion you would like to pin or close for comments, and then click-and-drag that discussion into the **Pinned Discussions** section at the top of the discussion board or the **Closed for Comments** section at the bottom of the discussion board.
3. You can also pin or close a discussion by clicking on the icon with three vertical dots to the right of the discussion title on the discussion board. Select **Pin** or **Close for comments** from the drop-down list, as shown in the following screenshot:

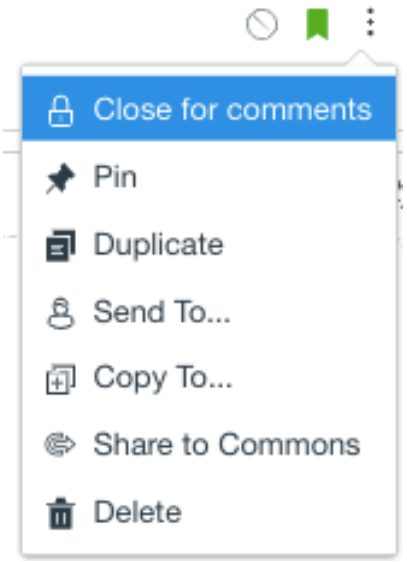


Figure 2.36 – The Pin or Close for comments options for discussions

As your course progresses, you and your students may create numerous discussion threads. Pinning discussions or closing them for comments allows you to organize and keep track of discussions within your course based on their importance.

Now that you know how to create assignments and discussions, let's move on to the final type of activity that we'll discuss in this chapter: quizzes.

Creating quizzes

The quizzes feature of Canvas allows you to create interactive assessments that students can complete online. You are able to design the questions and incorporate a number of traditional question types while setting the various parameters for taking the quiz.

> **Note**
>
> The following sections will explain how to create a quiz using the **Classic Quizzes** feature in Canvas. At the time of writing, the **Free for Teachers** instance of Canvas still utilizes the **Classic Quizzes** feature, though a **New Quizzes** feature with more varied and detailed options available for quiz questions is planned and may be available for some instances of Canvas. For information about the **New Quizzes** feature, check the Canvas Guides for up-to-date guidance, as we will discuss in *Chapter 7*, *Where to Go for Help*.

Adding a quiz

To create a quiz, perform the following steps:

1. Click on **Quizzes** on the left Course Navigation menu.
2. Click on the **+ Quiz** icon in the top-right corner of the page.
3. This will open a new quiz page with two tabs at the top for **Details** and **Questions**. By default, the new quiz will open to the **Details** tab, which includes a line to name the quiz (replace **Unnamed Quiz** with the quiz name you want to use) and the Rich Content Editor with the textbox below. Enter the instructions for your quiz in the textbox below the Rich Content Editor.
4. Under the textbox, you will see a drop-down menu for **Quiz Type**; if you click on this drop-down, you are given the option to make the quiz a **Practice Quiz**, a **Graded Quiz**, a **Graded Survey**, or an **Ungraded Survey**. Quizzes serve to assess students' learning as students answer content-related questions, while surveys serve to collect information from students. Graded quizzes or surveys will appear in the gradebook. You can choose which type of quiz you would like to create, and then move down the list of settings for your quiz.

We will discuss grouping assignments in the last section of this chapter, so for now, continue to the following list of settings:

- **Shuffle Answers**: This option allows you to alternate the order of the answers when the same question is displayed for each student or if you allow students to take the quiz multiple times.
- **Time Limit**: This option allows you to restrict the amount of time students have to complete the quiz once they begin.
- **Allow Multiple Attempts**: This option enables students to take the quiz more than once. When you check this box, you will see options that allow you to designate which score to keep as the student's grade and how many times students are allowed to retake the quiz.
- **Let Students See Their Quiz Responses**: This option will show students their answers after they answer each question. If you check this option, other options appear that allow you to let students see their responses – **Only Once After Each Attempt**, as well as the **Let Students See The Correct Answers** option once they have answered a question or on a specific date.
- **Show one question at a time**: This option requires students to move through the quiz sequentially rather than seeing the entire quiz and answering questions out of order. Through this option, you can also lock questions after answering them to prevent students from changing their previous answers.
- **Quiz Restrictions**: This option allows you to control who has access to the quiz. With this option, you can assign and **Require an access code** to take the quiz, which basically acts like a password for students to access the quiz. In addition, you can **Filter IP Addresses**, which limits who can take the quiz based on the range of their IP address. You may use this setting to limit students to only taking the quiz within a computer lab at your institution or within the wireless network of your institution.

The availability and date settings at the bottom are the same as the assignments and discussions we have talked about, so you can adjust them as required and then move on to adding questions and question groups to your quiz.

Adding questions

Once you have input the general instructions for the quiz and adjusted all of the quiz settings as required, you can click on the **Questions** tab above the Rich Text Editor. This will present you with the three different options as displayed in the following screenshot:

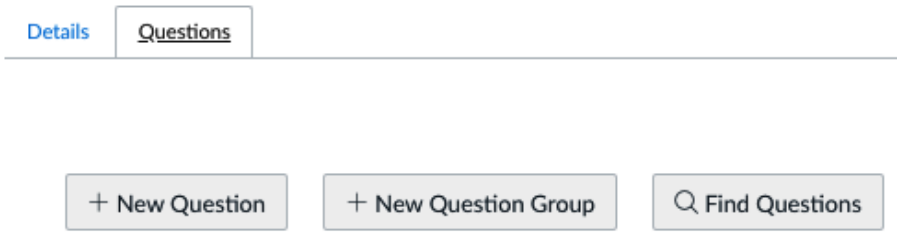


Figure 2.37 – Quiz Questions options

As you are creating your first quiz, you will need to create all of your quiz questions individually. To add a new question, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **+ New Question** button, which will open a new blank question template.
2. You can leave the question titled **Question** as the default, or you can name your question by editing the textbox at the top of the new question page.
3. You can then update the question type. The default question type is **Multiple Choice**, but you can choose from a large number of question types by clicking on the drop-down menu that displays **Multiple Choice** at the top of the page, as shown in the following screenshot:

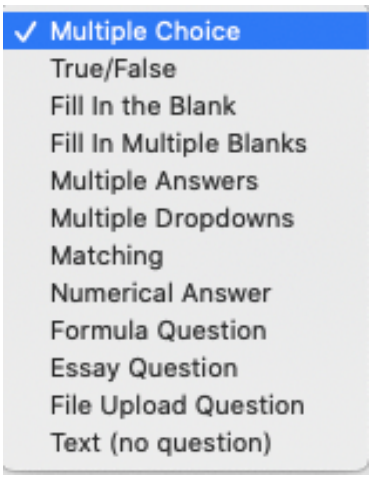


Figure 2.38 – Quiz question types

4. Once you select the question type, type the question into the textbox below the Rich Content Editor. Note that instructions on how to format the questions appear above the Rich Content Editor for each different question type.
5. The answer options below the Rich Content Editor will change to reflect the specific parameters of the selected question type. For any options you're unfamiliar with, you can hover your mouse over the icons to see a text description of their function. For multiple choice questions, you can type in the answer or possible answers in the area below the Rich Content Editor that says **Answer Text**. If you would like to add additional possible answers, click on the **+ Add Another Answer** button. The following screenshot offers an example of a multiple choice question. Notice the instructions above the Rich Content Editor as well as the possible answers below it:

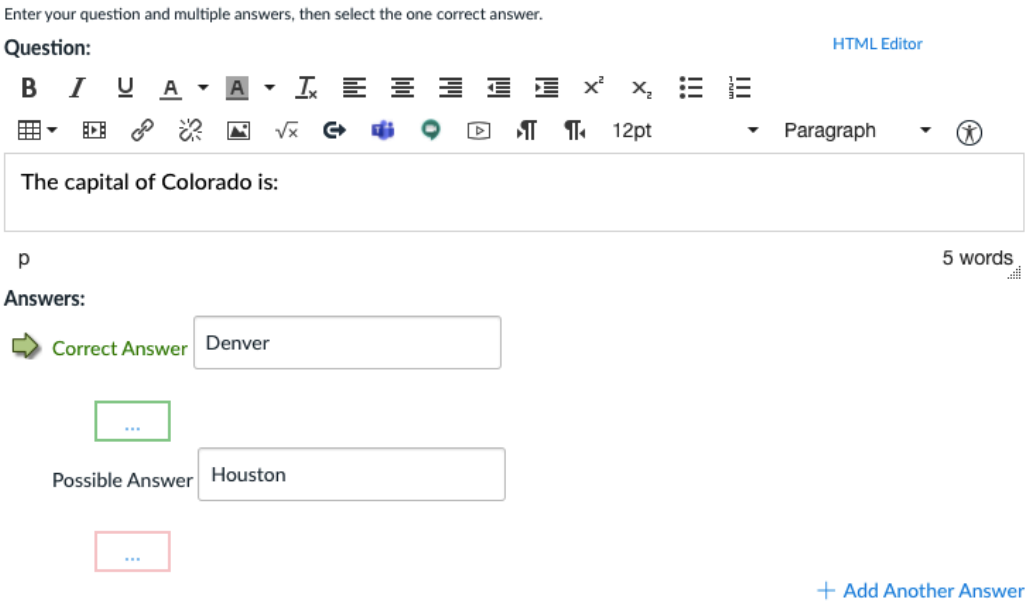


Figure 2.39 – Sample multiple choice question

6. After you have finished creating your question, click the **Update Question** button in the bottom corner.

Once you have begun adding questions, the **New Question Group** button will allow you to arrange the questions into categories and groups. From there, you can allow students to choose how many questions from the group they would like to answer and how many points each question will be worth. You also have the **Link to a Question Bank** option to link to a question bank.

You will be able to create and manage question banks by clicking on the **Find Questions** button, which will allow you to search for and add questions that you have already created for other quizzes. To find and add previously created questions to your quiz, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **Find Questions** button. A screen appears listing all of the questions you have created for the current quiz. If you have created other quizzes, you will see those questions appear as well.
2. Select the questions you wish to add by clicking the checkbox next to each question. You can click on the **Select All** button to select all of the questions listed or click on **Clear All** to clear your selections.
3. Scroll down and click on the **Add Questions** button at the bottom of the pop-up window to add the selected questions to your quiz.

Next, let's discuss how to manage question banks once you've started to create questions.

Managing question banks

The **Find Questions** pop-up window also includes the **View Course Question Banks** option to view and manage your course question banks. Question banks allow you to organize and arrange your questions for use across multiple quizzes. To create or edit question banks, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **Find Questions** button.
2. In the top-right corner of the pop-up window, click on **View Course Question Banks**, as displayed in the following screenshot:

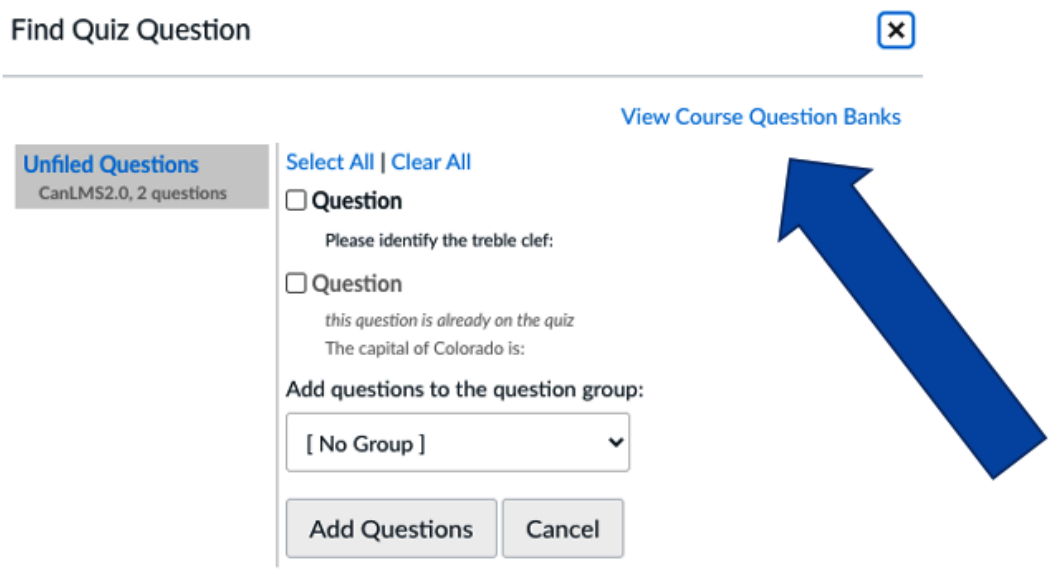


Figure 2.40 – View Course Question Banks link

3. On the page that opens, you can create a new question bank by clicking on the **+ Add Question Bank** button on the right Sidebar menu of the page. You can then type in the information for the new question bank on the template that appears in the center of your screen:

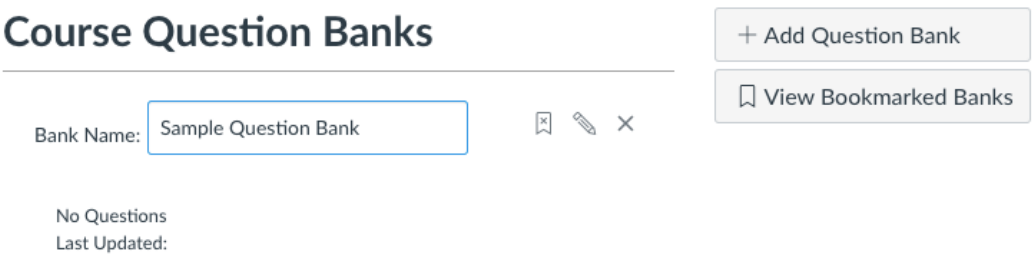


Figure 2.41 – New Question Bank example

4. After you have typed in the title of the new bank, press the *Enter* key on your keyboard to create the question bank.

5. Once you have created a new question bank, you can click on the question bank title to open the question bank. The options pictured in the following screenshot appear on the right Sidebar menu and allow you to edit and adjust the question bank to your liking:

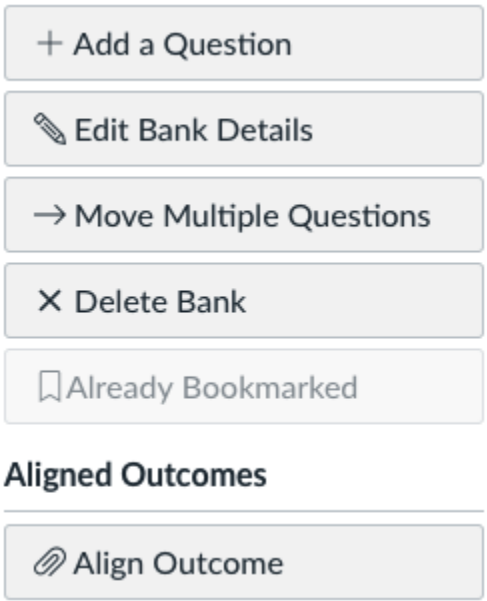


Figure 2.42 – Question bank options

6. Once you are satisfied with your new or edited question bank, you can return to your quiz by clicking on the **Quizzes** tab on the left Course Navigation menu.

Once your quiz is saved, you will be redirected back to the quizzes page. At the top of that page, you will again see the notification that the quiz is unpublished. When your quiz is completely built, you must publish your quiz before students will be able to take it. You can publish the quiz in the same way we published our first assignment by clicking on the gray icon that looks like a cancel symbol, which will then turn into a green checkmark icon to indicate that the quiz has been published.

Now that we have learned to create assignments, discussions, and quizzes, let's take a look at how to organize those activities into assignment groups.

Creating assignment groups

As you work to create the assignments from your course syllabus, you may want to organize the activities into assignment groups. Canvas makes it easy to create new assignment groups, adjust their weighted percentage, and add specific grading rules for each assignment group. To create an assignment group, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Assignments** tab on the left Course Navigation menu, and then click on the **+ Group** button at the top right of the assignments page.
2. In the pop-up window that appears, you can enter your chosen name in the **Group Name** field for the new assignment group and then click **Save**.
3. The pop-up window will close, and you will now see a new section of the **Assignments** page with the title of your new assignment group. You will also see any graded assignments, quizzes, or discussions that you have created listed on the page. To move assignments, quizzes, or discussions to a different assignment group, click on the dots that appear to the left of the assignment name and then drag the activity underneath the desired assignment group heading, as shown in the following screenshot:

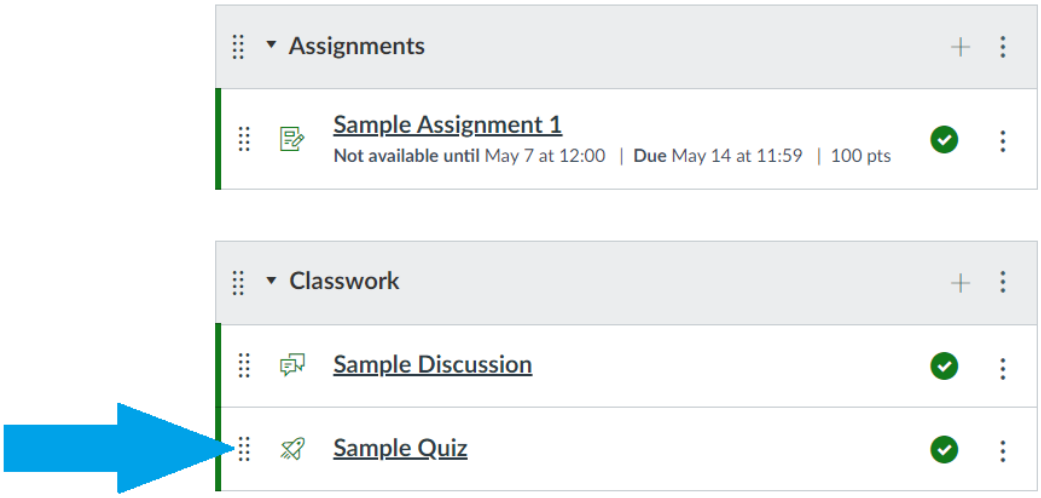


Figure 2.43 – Activities organized into different assignment groups

Once you have created your assignment groups and dragged your assignments into the correct groups, you can specify grading rules for each group. To specify grading rules for an assignment group, complete the following steps:

1. Click the icon with three vertical dots to the right of the assignment group name and select **Edit** from the drop-down menu.
2. The pop-up menu that appears includes the same options that you saw when you created the assignment group with the added ability to designate the **Number of scores to ignore for each student**. You may choose to automatically drop the highest or lowest score of any assignment within an assignment group. You can also choose to never drop the score of certain assignments.
3. When you have finished creating the grading rules for your new assignment group, click on **Save** in the bottom-right corner of the pop-up window.

Creating assignment groups not only organizes the assignments to let students see what they will need to complete for your course, but it also gives you the option to weight groups of assignments for grading purposes.

Weighting assignment groups

In many traditional grading systems, certain types of assignments may count for various percentages of a student's final grade. For example, homework might make up 20 percent, quizzes might make up 30 percent, essays might make up 35 percent, and the final project might make up 15 percent. By weighting assignment groups, you can quickly and easily arrange the assignments you have already created so Canvas can automatically calculate students' final grades based on these weights as you grade work throughout the course. To weight assignment groups, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **Assignments** option on the left Course Navigation menu.
2. To weight the assignment groups, click on the icon with three vertical dots at the top-right corner of the **Assignments** page. This icon is located to the right of the **+ Group** and **+ Assignment** buttons.
3. From the drop-down menu that opens, select **Assignment Groups Weight**. Within the pop-up window that appears, check the box that reads **Weight final grade based on assignment groups**.
4. When you check that box, notice that the assignment groups appear below the checkbox with a table of assignment group weights. You can then set each assignment group to make up a customized percentage of the final grade, as shown in the following screenshot:

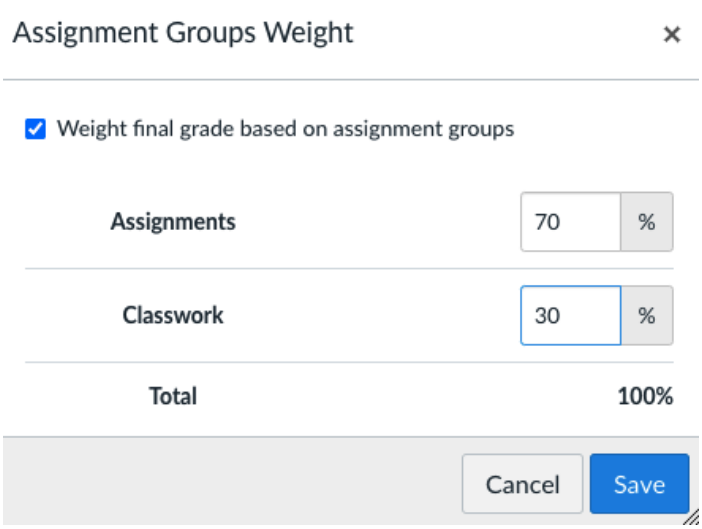


Figure 2.44 – Sample assignment group weights

After you have organized all of your assignments into the desired groups, look back over the table of assignment group weights next to each assignment group. If needed, you can edit your assignment groups by editing each individual group, or you can click on the edit icon in the top-right corner of the **Assignments** page to edit all of the group weights at once.

If you decide that you would rather not weight students' final grades based on the assignment groups, all you need to do is uncheck the weighting option after clicking on the edit icon in the top-right corner of the **Assignments** page.

Summary

We started this chapter with a discussion of planning your course, and then we worked through how to import content from another course. Next, we dove into adding assignments and became acquainted with the Rich Content Editor. After this, we learned how to create discussions and quizzes. Finally, we explored how to create assignment groups and how to weight grades based on the assignment groups.

Now that we have learned how to add and edit content in Canvas, you can now work through the process of creating the content and building your course on your own. Once you've created your course content using the skills learned in this chapter, we will continue the journey of teaching your course in *Chapter 3*, *Getting Ready to Launch Your Course*. We will focus on the organization and presentation of your course, and then we will move on to adding students to the course and preparing your course to be published.

3

Getting Ready to Launch Your Course

Now that you have created the content for your course within Canvas, we can proceed to organizing your content and choosing the most effective means of presenting content to your students. We'll also explore how to use other organizational tools, add participants, and publish your course. In this chapter, we will cover how to do the following:

- Choose a Course Home Page layout
- Select links to make visible on the left a Course Navigation Menu that will be most useful to your students during the course
- Add course calendar events
- Preview and proofread your course using Student View
- Add and manage participants for your course
- Publish your course

By the end of this chapter, you will have totally built, organized, designed, and published your course in order to begin teaching your course in *Chapter 4*, *Teaching Your Canvas Course*.

Technical requirements

To complete this chapter, you will need the following:

- A computer with internet access
- A Canvas account (see *Chapter 1*, *Getting Started with Canvas*)
- A Canvas course with course content created (see *Chapter 2*, *Building Your Canvas Course*)
- A course roster

Choosing a Course Home Page layout

The home page for your course is the first thing your students will see when they log in. Even the most well-prepared courses can stall at the beginning if the directions for accessing the course content are not clear; therefore, choosing the best home page layout for your course is an important task. To accommodate a variety of student needs and teaching styles, Canvas has made it possible to choose from five different Course Home Page layouts. To select from these options, complete the following steps:

1. Go to the home page (of your course), then click the **Choose Home Page** option on the right Sidebar menu, as shown in the following screenshot:

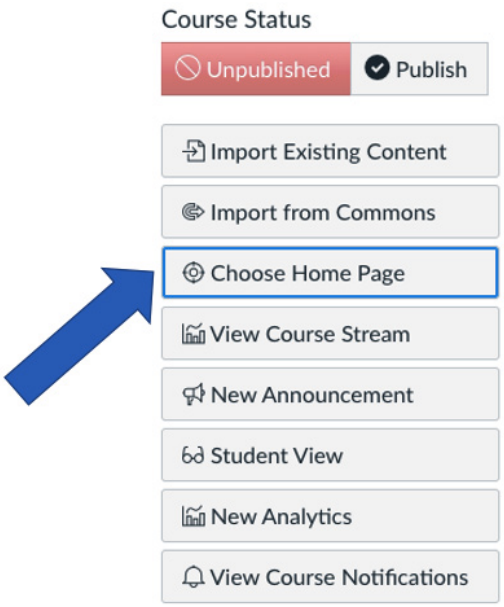


Figure 3.1 – Choose Home Page option of the right Sidebar menu

2. After you click on the **Choose Home Page** option, you will see a pop-up window with options for you to choose one of the five layouts. Note that the **Pages Front Page** option may not be available if you have not yet created any custom content pages; we will discuss this option in the upcoming *The Pages Front Page layout* section. The following screenshot shows the five options that appear in the pop-up window:

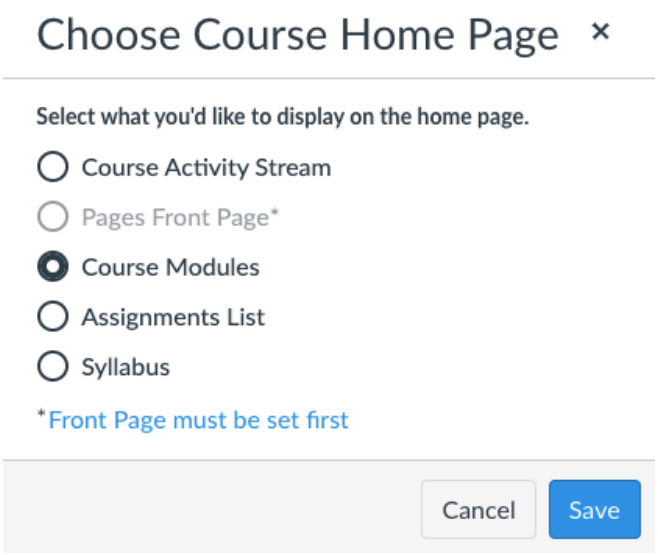


Figure 3.2 – List of the five Course Home Page options

3. Select your desired layout, then click the **Save** button to update your Course Home Page.

We will discuss these five options in more detail in the upcoming sections, but keep in mind that whichever home page layout you choose should clearly guide your students to the content you've posted to foster success in your course. As we learn about each home page layout type, keep your students and your specific teaching situation in mind to ensure your content organization decisions are student-centered.

Keep your own teaching style and skill sets in mind as well, as each layout offers different levels of involvement and customization. We'll now take a look at each of the layouts and discuss when each layout might be most beneficial to your students and you.

The Course Activity Stream layout

The **Course Activity Stream** layout will show users everything that has happened within your course that they might have missed; for example, new assignments, discussions, or grades that have been posted recently. The following considerations may help you decide whether this layout would be most helpful for your course:

- You might consider using this Course Home Page layout if you plan to add/publish content chronologically as you teach your course. This layout could also work well if you plan to use Canvas predominantly for having students complete and submit work to Canvas after information is presented in class, as opposed to having students work through content posted on Canvas on their own.
- You might consider using this Course Home Page layout with students who you know have taken online courses before and are familiar with accessing course content online.
- If you are working with technologically savvy students, the Course Activity Stream may work well due to its similarity to the update feeds on social media sites such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter. The similarities to these sites can help more some students feel at ease with accessing your course and keeping up with their responsibilities in more of a *do now* fashion.
- If you have students in your class with less experience in online learning, you might want to consider one of the other Course Home Page layouts that offer a more consistent presentation of material.

For the **Course Activity Stream** home page layout, you do not need to do anything once you select that option as your home page. This home page layout will automatically display recent events once the course begins. Your students will need to access to the course content using the navigation links you will choose for the left Course Navigation Menu, which we will discuss in the *Selecting navigation links* section shortly, and the course content displayed will change depending on the recent activity of your course when students open the home page.

While the **Course Activity Stream** layout updates automatically, let's now take a look at the customizable **Pages Front Page** layout option.

The Pages Front Page layout

The next option, **Pages Front Page**, will allow you to create a custom content page that includes any information you would like to include and designate it as the **front page** for your course. You can design this page in the same way you would design the welcome page of a website, and Canvas allows you to do so by using the Rich Content Editor to create your content page.

Most often, the content of a custom-designed front page would contain welcome information, instructions, and links to course content. If you have not yet created any content pages (which we will discuss how to do in this section), you should click the **Front Page must be set first** link from the **Choose Home Page** pop-up menu as shown in the following screenshot:

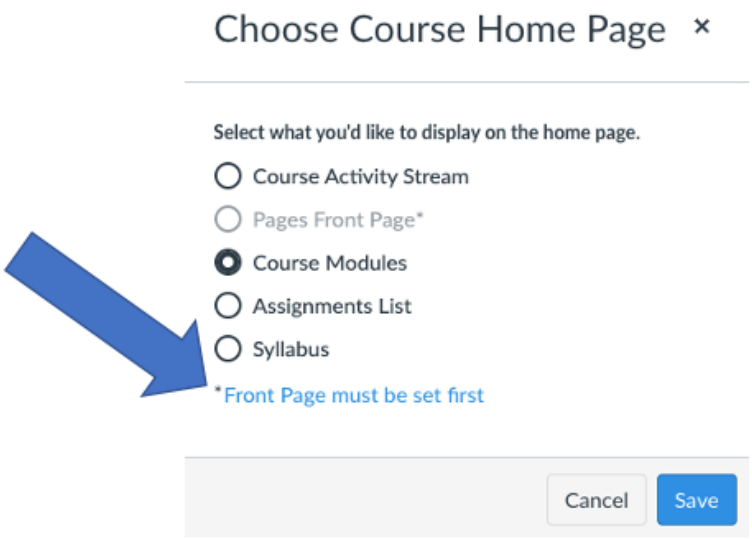


Figure 3.3 – The Front Page must be set first link from the home page layout pop-up menu

Once you click this link, it will take you to the **Pages** feature of Canvas, which can also be accessed by clicking on **Pages** from the left Course Navigation Menu. To create and edit your custom home page, complete the following steps:

1. On the **Pages** feature, click the **+ Page** button in the top-right corner of the screen, as shown here:

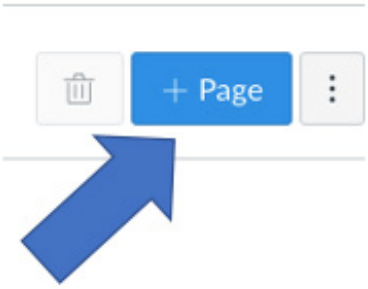


Figure 3.4 – Click the + Page button to create a new content page

2. From there, a screen will open up that allows you to use the Rich Content Editor (which we discussed in depth during *Chapter 2*, *Building Your Canvas Course*) in order to build your front page. You can add as much information and content as you would like, but it's generally best to keep the front page simple, concise, and visually appealing with the most relevant information and instructions presented clearly.
3. After you have finished created and editing your Front Page, click **Save & Publish** at the bottom of the screen. Make sure to publish your page if you want to use it as your home page – you're not able to set an unpublished page as your home page.
4. After you have saved and published your page, you will see your content page displayed. To set this page as your course's front page, click on the icon with three vertical dots in the top-right corner, then select **Use as Front Page** as shown in the following screenshot:

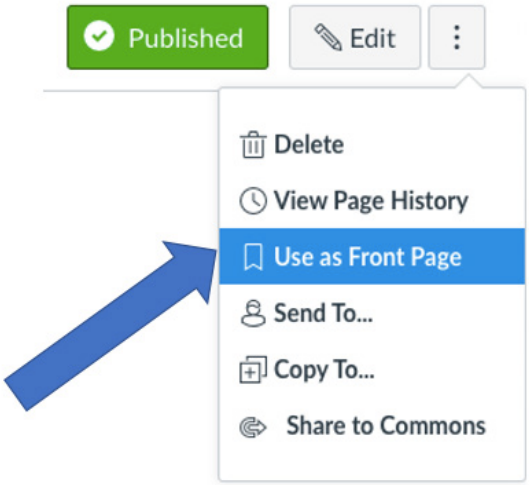


Figure 3.5 – Select Use as Front Page to make your content page the home page of your course

5. Next, you will need to return to the Course Home Page on the left Course Navigation Menu then click on **Choose Home Page** on the right Sidebar menu again. **Pages Front Page** will now be available as an option in the pop-up menu that appears, and the name of your custom page will appear as the front page option as shown here:

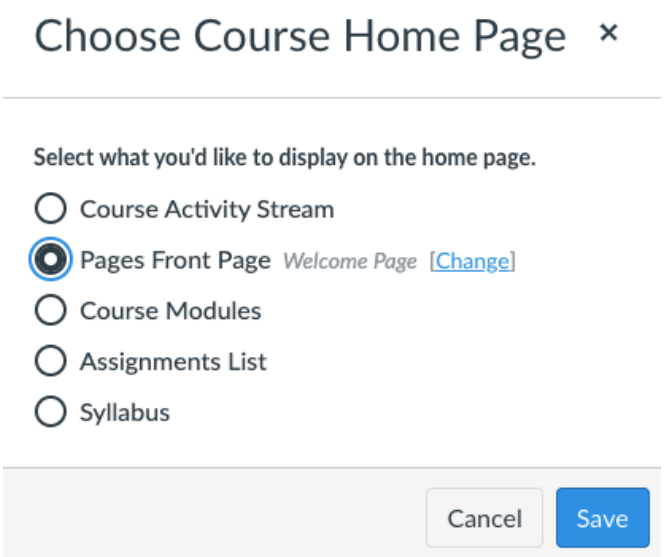


Figure 3.6 – Select the Pages Front Page option once you have created your custom front page

Once you have created and set your front page, you can always go back to edit your page by clicking the **Pages** link on the left Course Navigation Menu. You will see the front page of your course with options at the top to **View All Pages**, see the published status of your course, **Edit** your front page, or adjust the settings of your front page. These options are pictured in the following screenshot:



Figure 3.7 – Pages feature menu

At this point, the only content page that has been created is the page you created as your front page. You might also wish to set up other content pages with further instructions and content; this type of course design allows you to basically create a completely customized course that students work through just like any other website on the internet. To create a new page, click on **View All Pages**, which will take you to a list of all of the content pages that have been created. You can use the **+ Page** button in the top right to create new content pages to use for instruction. Once you have created a page, it will show up when you click the **Pages** navigation link on the left side menu. From the **Pages** page, you will be able to view, edit, and delete any content pages you have created. In deciding whether this layout would work best for you, you might consider the following ideas:

- Using a custom-designed content page as your Course Home Page layout is great for teachers who are comfortable using the Rich Content Editor.
- This allows students to experience a personalized, unique welcome to the course when they log in that can offer clear instructions for how to participate in the course.
- You can easily embed important content that students will need for success in the course directly on the home page with the Rich Content Editor, and you may choose to design your course using other content pages that will allow students to explore and experiment with the course content at their own pace.

While you certainly do not have to create multiple content pages, you might wish to use pages in conjunction with materials and assignments in the next type of home page layout we will discuss, the **Course Modules** layout.

The Course Modules layout

The **Course Modules** layout allows you to sequence various types of content on Canvas clearly on the Course Home Page so students can begin participating immediately when they first log in and work their way through the content of the course sequentially. To create a module, complete the following steps:

1. When you select this option from the **Choose Home Page** pop-up menu then click **Save**, you will see a graphic with an option to **Create a new Module** appear in the center of your Course Home Page as shown in the following screenshot:

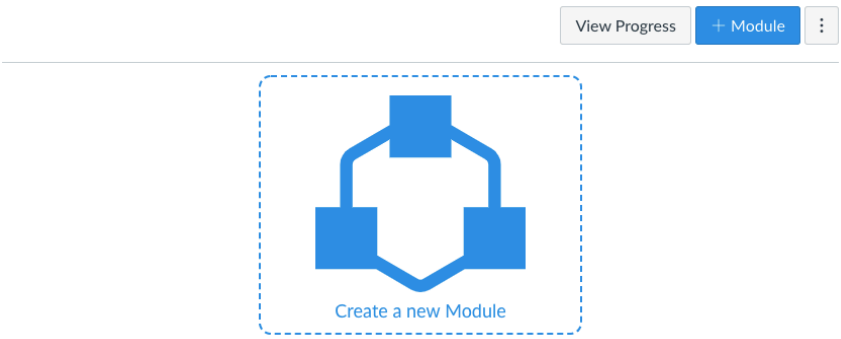


Figure 3.8 – Create a new Module option

2. Click the **Create a new Module** button or the **+ Module** button and a pop-up window will appear that allows you to name the module and to choose to lock the module until a certain date. Locking a module will hide the content of the module from participants in your course until the date you specify. The following screenshot shows an example of what the first course module settings might look like:

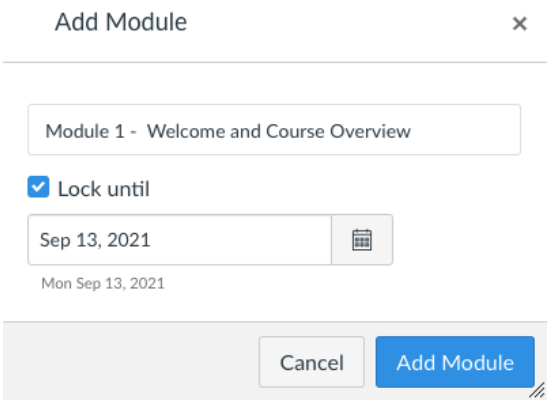


Figure 3.9 – Sample module settings

3. When you have adjusted the module name and lock settings to your liking, click **Add Module** to create your first module. The pop-up window will close and reveal your new home page with an empty first module.
4. To add content you have already created in Canvas to the module, you can click the plus icon to the top right of the module title bar, as shown in the following screenshot:

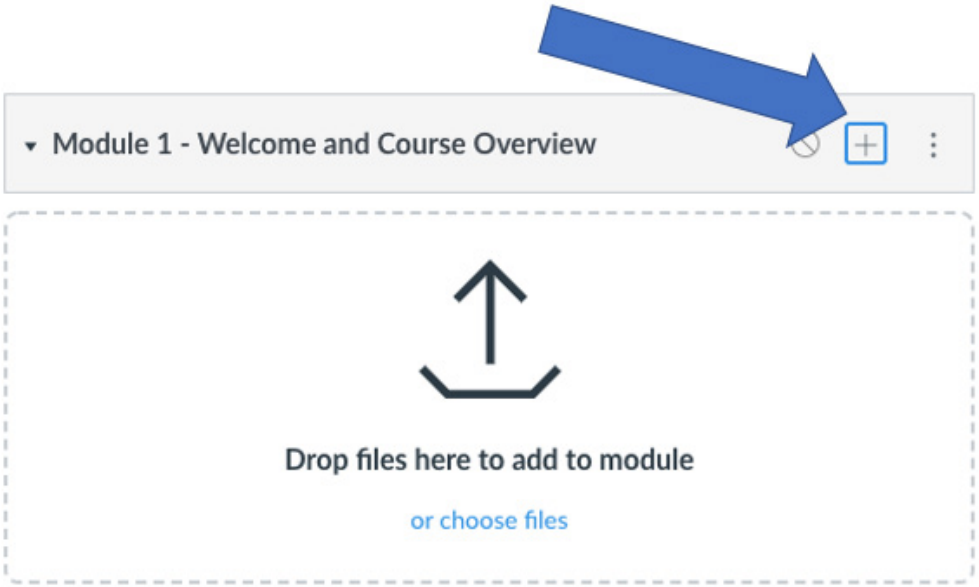


Figure 3.10 – Add content from Canvas to your module using the plus icon

5. Clicking the plus icon in the top-right corner will allow you to choose content that already exists on Canvas, such as assignments, quizzes, discussions, or content pages to add to your module. You can also create new, blank items from this menu that you can update with more details after you add them to the module. When you click the plus icon, a pop-up window will open, allowing you to select the type of content you would like to add from a drop-down menu, as shown in the following screenshot. You can also choose to indent the item in the module for aesthetic clarity using the **Indentation** drop-down menu. Choose the type of content you want to add, select the desired indent option, then click **Add Item**:

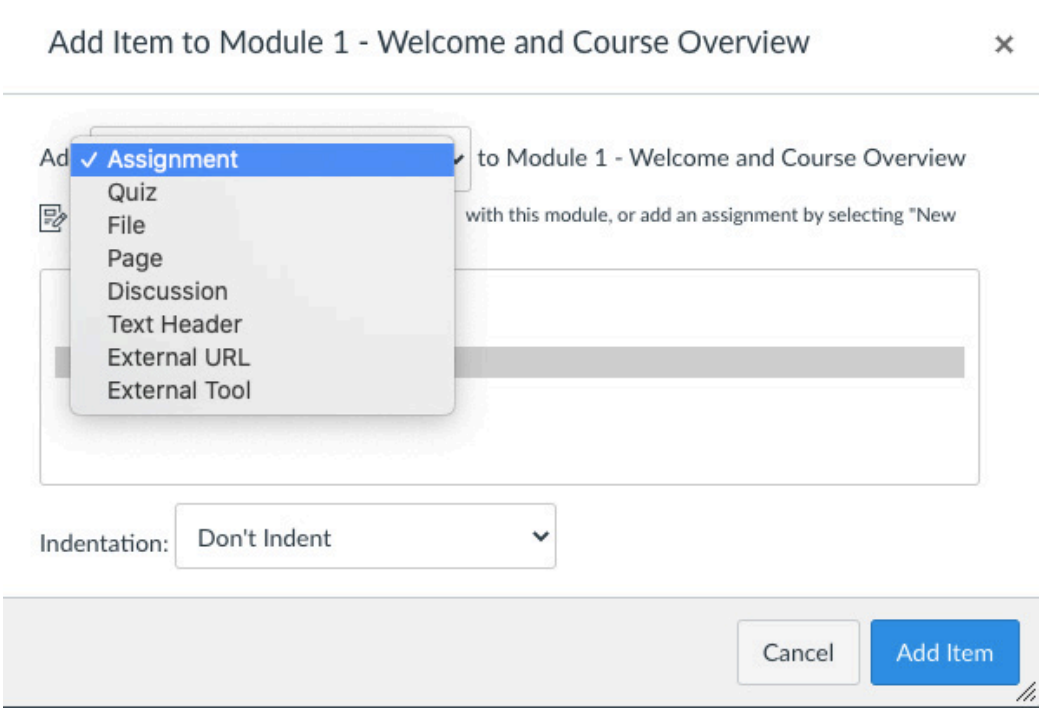


Figure 3.11 – Content drop-down menu to add content to module

6. Once you click the **Add Item** button, you will see the item appear in the module on the home page. You can add as many items as you would like to each module, and you can create new modules by clicking the **+ Module** button at the top of the home page.
7. If you have files you'd like to upload directly to the module from your computer, you can drag and drop files onto the module directly to upload the files to Canvas and allow students to view or download them from the module.

8. To rearrange items within a module, click and drag the dots that appear to the left of the item name, as pictured in the following screenshot:

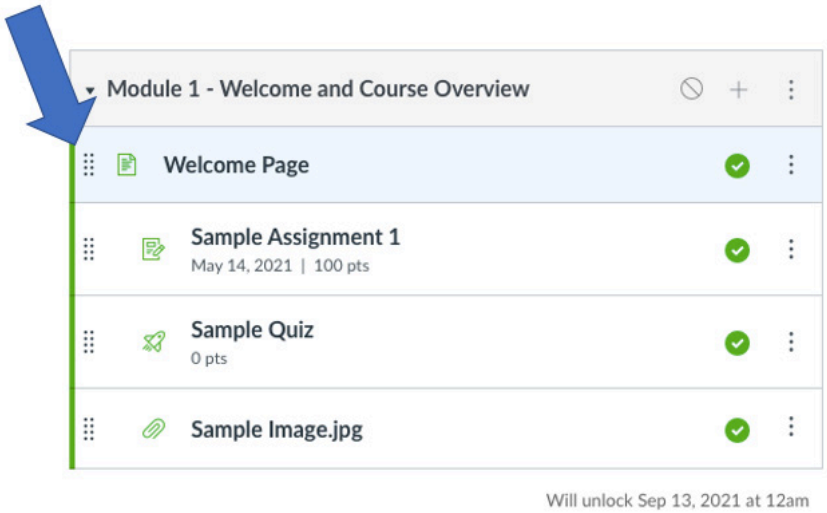


Figure 3.12 – Click and drag the dots to the right of a module item to reorder the module content

9. Once you have added content and arranged your module, make sure to publish your module by clicking the grey cancel icon next to the plus sign icon, which is shown in the previous screenshot to the right of the module name. When your course is published, the cancel icon will turn into a green check icon as shown here:

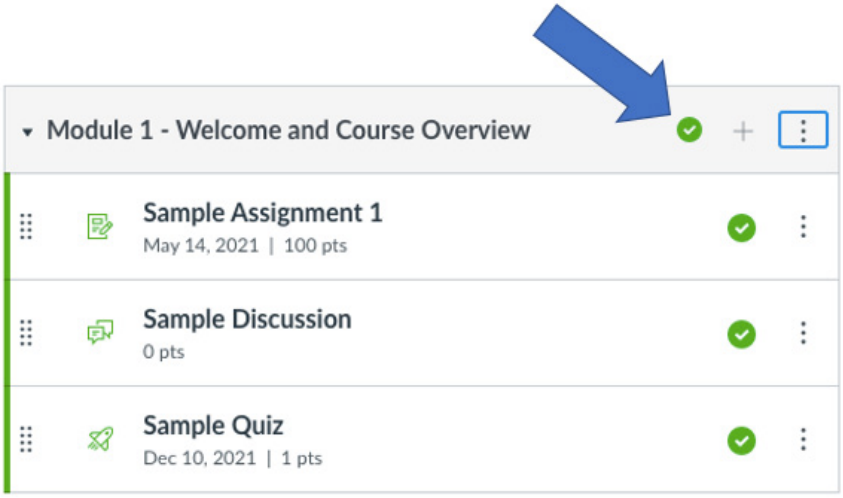


Figure 3.13 – Publish your module when you have added and arranged your content

By creating course modules, you are able to organize content sequentially, and you can set prerequisites that ensure students move through the content in order. As you add content to modules, the options to edit will expand and allow you to set requirements for each item within the module. To adjust the restrictions and prerequisites for each module, complete the following steps:

1. Click the icon with three vertical dots in the top-right corner of the module, then click **Edit**.
2. Once you have added content to the module, you will see a new option, **Add Requirement**, which students will need to complete in order to move past the module in the course. You can add requirements for as many items as you like, or you can allow students to move through the modules at their own pace. The following screenshot displays sample requirements for a module:

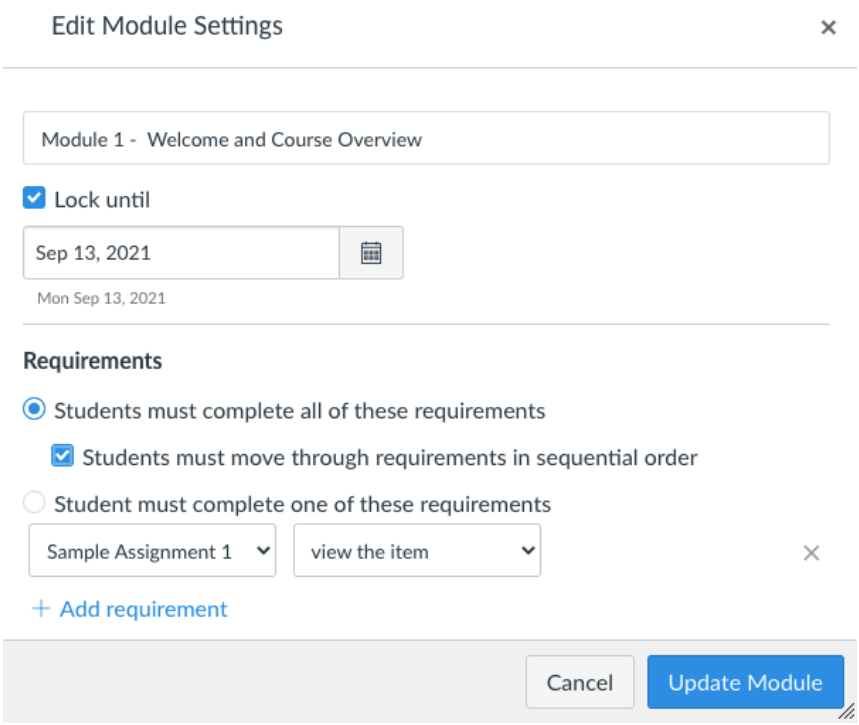


Figure 3.14 – Customize the requirements and prerequisites of a module

3. For additional modules you create, you'll see the option instead to **Add Prerequisite** before seeing additional content.
4. When you have adjusted the settings to your liking, click **Update Module**.

When you organize content into modules and open the page for an item, **Next** or **Previous** arrows appear at the bottom of each item's page that allow students to move to the next item in the module sequentially. For example, if you have placed an assignment between two other items within a module, arrows will appear at the bottom of the assignment page that will allow you to navigate to the preceding and subsequent items in the module with one easy click as shown here:

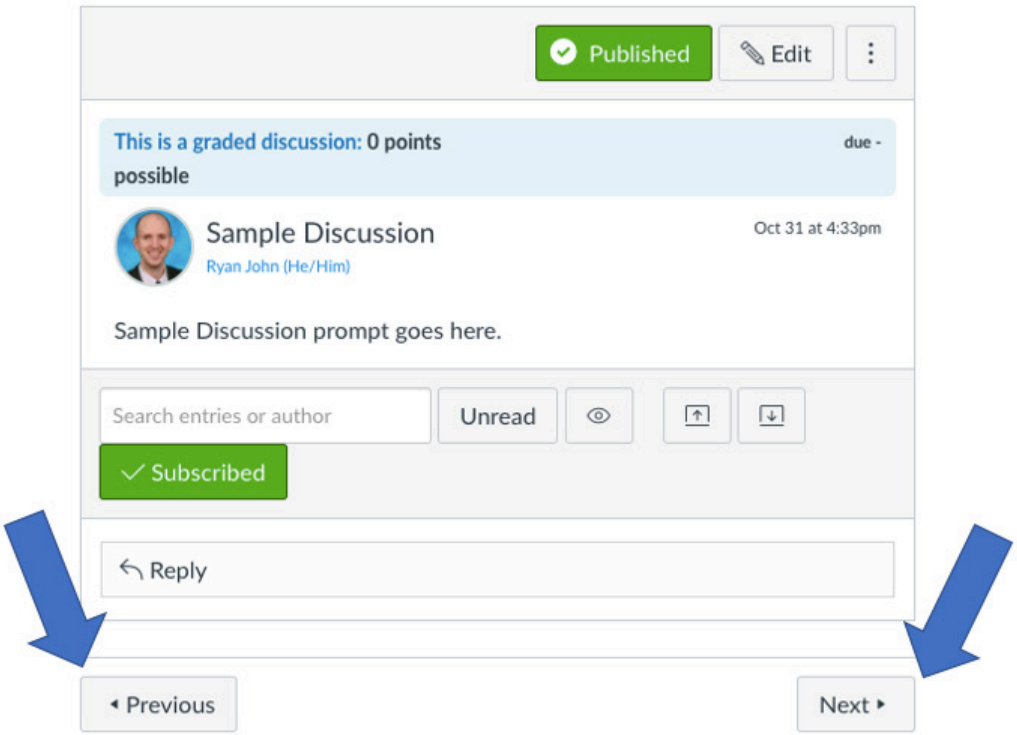


Figure 3.15 – Content within a module will allow students to click through content sequentially

You may wish to only reveal content one week at a time or to make it all available from the first day so students can move as quickly or slowly as they wish. You may also wish to add content pages to each module that explain the instructions for the module. The combinations and options are numerous, and you have the freedom to utilize as many or as few of the options made available to you depending on your needs and comfort level.

The **Course Modules** home page layout offers a clear, concise sequence through which your students can move, while allowing you to incorporate your own teaching style by adjusting the settings. You may wish to allow students to move through each module at their own pace or require them to move through the content sequentially.

The following considerations may help you decide whether the **Course Modules** home page layout would work well for your course:

- If students will be using Canvas to access and interact with your course content, the **Course Modules** layout is a great way to organize a variety of content and activities in a straightforward way for students to access.
- If your course is easily broken into units of study with sequential materials and activities, then the **Course Modules** layout may work well for you. For example, you may choose to create a module for each unit of study in your course and place all of the materials and activities for that unit of study into the module in the desired sequence.
- If your course meets less frequently, for example weekly instead of daily, and the content is easily divided into periods of time, you could label each module with the corresponding period of time so students know what activities they should be completing and generally when they should be completing them. This would be particularly helpful for courses with asynchronous learners or courses where students are required to complete many activities outside of a synchronous class time or lesson.

The **Course Modules** layout allows you to arrange various types content however you would like, whereas the next layout, the **Assignment List** layout, automatically organizes activities sequentially by due date for your students.

The Assignment List layout

The **Assignment List** layout allows your students to see a clear list of the assignments you have created for the course in chronological order by due date. When you select this Course Home Page layout option and click **Save**, you will see the list of assignments appear as the new home page for your course as shown in the following screenshot:

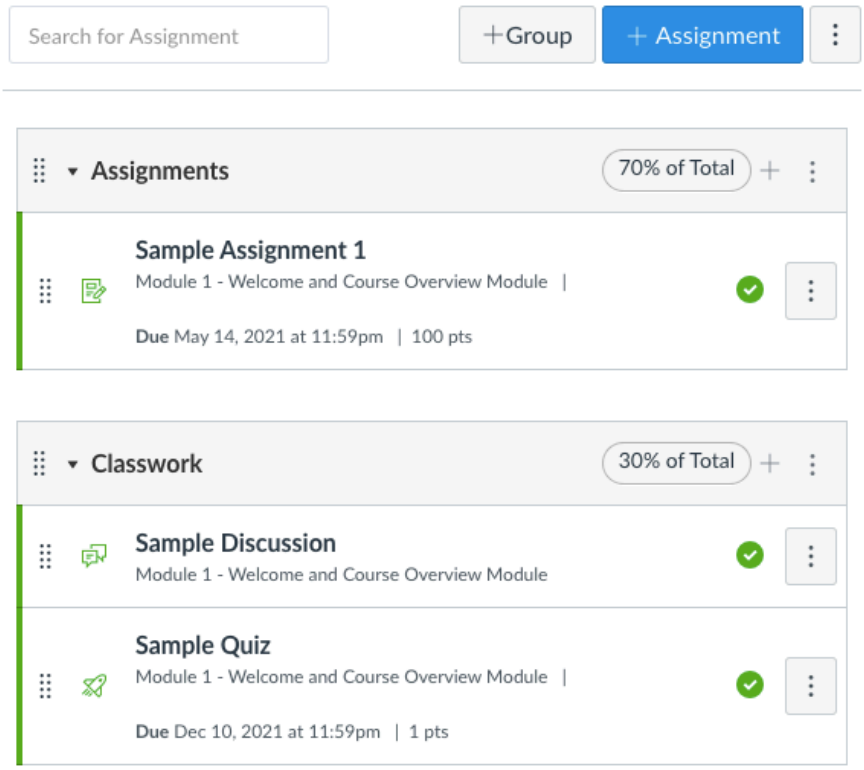


Figure 3.16 – Example of the Assignment List layout

As you consider whether this layout would work well for you, the following suggestions may help in your decision:

- This Course Home Page layout would be an excellent idea for a live course with online expectations; students would be able to log in and see the exact assignments they would need to complete with the due date and point value clearly listed in one place. Content delivered during the live class would allow students to successfully complete the assignments by logging in to Canvas then completing and submitting their work for you to grade. Of course, this layout would also be suitable for the other types of classes you may be teaching, and you may choose to use this layout depending on the needs of your students and your teaching style.

- This Course Home Page layout would work well for classes that include many assignments and activities. Students would be able to learn content from synchronous class meetings or through other features of Canvas such as content pages, and their attention would be drawn to the activities that would be assessed or graded each time they visit your course's home page.

Similar to the **Assignment List** layout, the **Syllabus** layout organizes your activities by due date and provides more room for customized information for students.

The Syllabus layout

The **Syllabus** Course Home Page layout is similar to the **Assignment List** layout but allows you to add a custom syllabus description above the **Course Summary** as well as a course calendar and grading information added to the bottom of the right Sidebar menu of the home page. Once you select this option as your Course Home Page and click **Save**, you can create a custom description for your course, which could act just as the welcome page you might design if you were to choose the **Pages Front Page** layout. To customize your syllabus description, complete the following steps:

1. Click the **Edit** button in the top right of the screen as pictured in the following screenshot:



Figure 3.17 – Edit your course syllabus description

2. From there, a page will open with the Rich Content Editor, and you will be able to add a welcome message, write a syllabus description, and embed any content you might wish to include.
3. Click **Update Syllabus** to save your course description, and it will appear above the assignment list on your new Course Home Page.

This Course Home Page layout is very well suited to any kind of course you may be teaching; it requires minimal work on your part in entering the syllabus description, and the course layout comes across very clearly to students at all levels of technological experience.

The following considerations may help you decide whether this layout would work well for you and your students:

- If you would like students to have ready access to a broad overview of your course as well as a sequential view of the content they will complete, this layout would work well as students would frequently see the course description and all content laid out clearly.
- If you are planning to use the various features of Canvas to create activities with set due dates consistently, this layout will display those activities clearly and will update automatically as you publish each activity.

Now that we have explored all five of the home page layouts available for your course, you can choose the layout that you believe will best help your students to succeed in your course. Once you have chosen the home page layout, it will be very helpful to determine which navigation links you want participants to be able to see on the left Course Navigation Menu.

Selecting navigation links

Choosing which course **navigation links** your students will see can help to direct them to through your course content logically and can help to avoid overwhelming students with features they may not need to use. As the instructor, you will be able to see all navigation links and access the features of each link as needed. The navigation links appear on the left Course Navigation Menu, and you can decide which of those links your students see when they log in to participate.

Canvas automatically hides links to features with no content present for students, but you see all links and can manually adjust which links students see. To change the navigation links that participants will see, complete the following steps:

1. Click on **Settings** at the bottom of the left Course Navigation Menu, then click on the **Navigation** tab at the top of the **Settings** page.

2. When you have reached the **Navigation** tab of the **Settings** page, you will see a list of the available navigation links you have the option of displaying for your course. You can reorder the links by clicking and dragging them, or you can disable and hide certain links from students by dragging the links to the bottom half of the screen. The following example has several of the links hidden or disabled to simplify the presentation of the course:

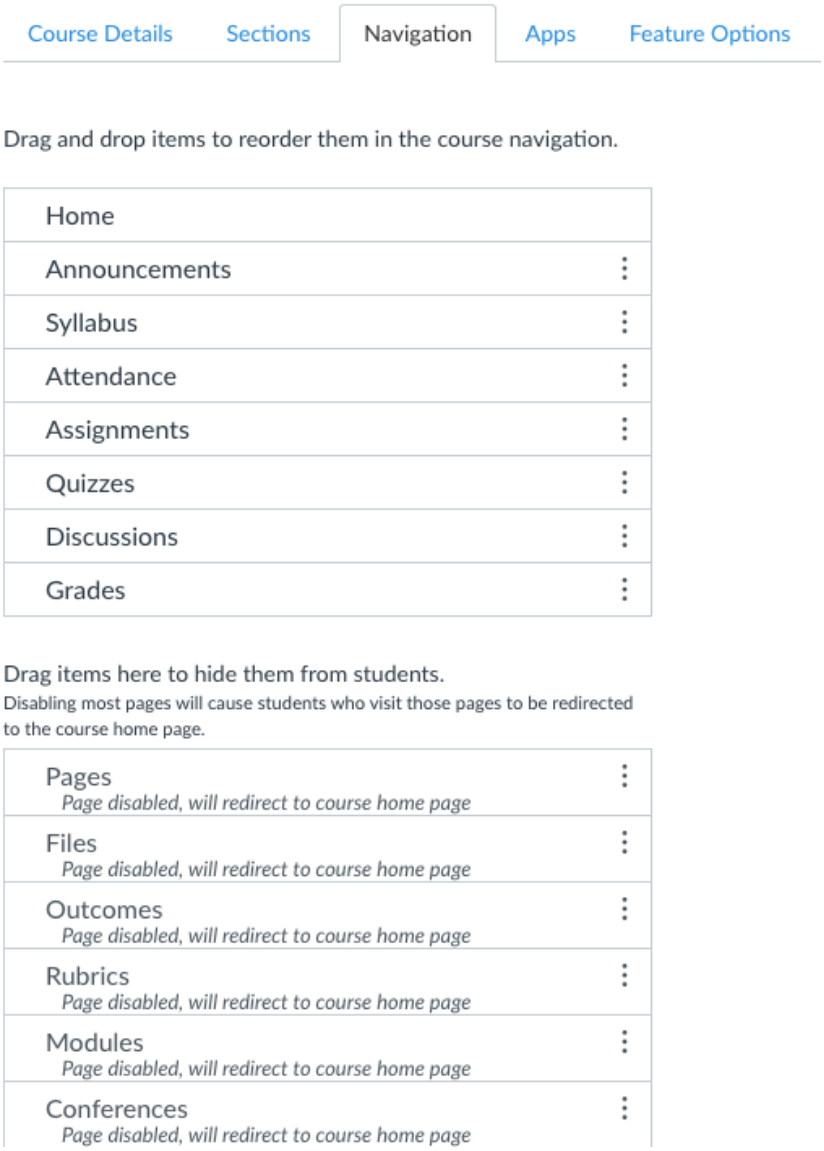


Figure 3.18 – Simplify your Course Navigation Menu for students

3. When you have finished arranging the navigation links and have decided which links you would like students to see, click the **Save** button at the bottom of the screen.

Once you have saved your preferences, you will notice that you can still see all of the navigation links on the left Course Navigation Menu, but the links you have hidden or disabled appear with an icon to their right indicating they are not visible to students, as shown in the following screenshot:

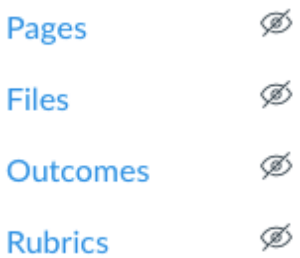


Figure 3.19 – Hidden navigation links icon

When deciding on which links to display to your students and which links to hide, consider what types of content you have made available to your students and the ways in which you have organized your course. For example, if you have decided against using the discussions feature of Canvas altogether and have not created any discussion posts or discussion assignments, you might consider hiding the discussion navigation link to simplify where students can go while exploring your course.

While we have now covered how to add most types of content to your course, let's explore one more feature, the calendar, before moving on to adding participants and publishing your course.

Adding course calendar events

Once you have picked a Course Home Page layout and finished organizing the content of your course accordingly, you may wish to add other events to your course **calendar** that do not already appear as activities or content within your course. Examples of events you may wish to add to your course calendar might include the following:

- Live class meetings
- Synchronous online meetings
- Field trips
- Special events (for example, lectures, performances, student birthdays, holidays)

To add events to your calendar, complete the following steps:

1. Click the **Calendar** icon on the left Global Navigation menu.
2. You will see your calendar for Canvas, which will display calendar items such as due dates for all courses you are involved with as well as a personal calendar you can use for yourself.
3. To add a new calendar event, click the plus sign icon at the top-right corner of the calendar page. A pop-up window will open that will allow you to create a new calendar event.
4. Notice the tabs at the top of the pop-up window allow you to create an **Event** or create a new **Assignment** should you choose to do so using this feature.
5. To add an event, stay on the **Event** tab and enter the **title** of the event in the **Title** field, the **Date** settings of the event, the times **from** which the event will run in the **From** and **to** fields, the **Location** name, and to which **Calendar** you would like to add the event. These options are pictured in the following screenshot:

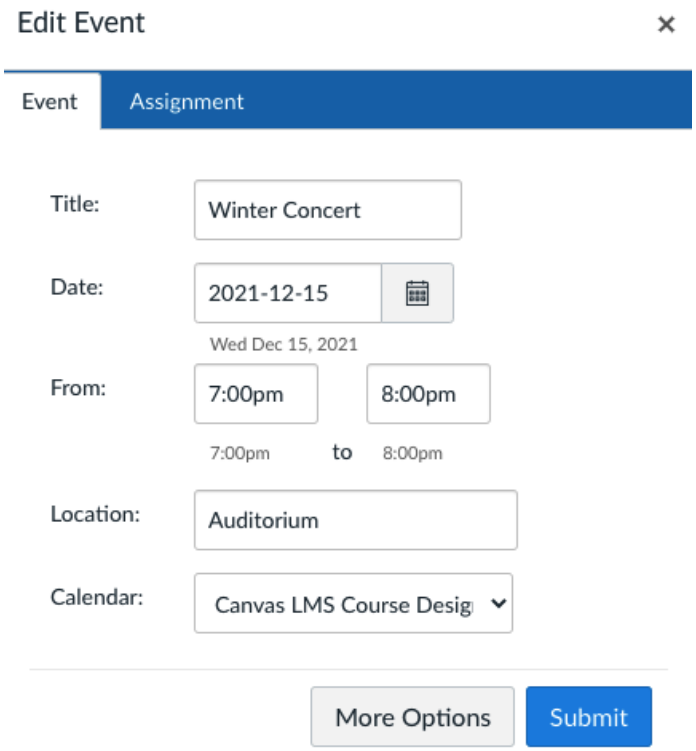


Figure 3.20 – Sample calendar event

6. If you would like to add more information to the event, you can click the **More Options** button to view a page with the Rich Content Editor that will allow you to embed content for the event you are creating.
7. Once you are finished entering the information for your new event, click the **Submit** button. The pop-up window will close, and your new event will appear on the calendar you selected.

Notice that you have the option to change the calendar you are viewing. Your name will appear with a colored checkbox, as will the names of the courses you are teaching, as shown in the following screenshot:

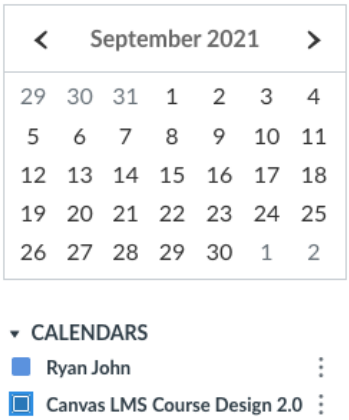


Figure 3.21 – View different calendars on the right Sidebar menu

You can check or uncheck each calendar to see what items appear for each calendar. Students enrolled in a course will be able to see the calendar for that course, whereas only you will be able to see your personal calendar.

Once you have finished adding any calendar events, you are now ready to review and proof your course using the Student View feature.

Testing your course with Student View

Congratulations! You've made it through building your Canvas course. Before we move on to publishing, it is always a good idea to start on the home page of your course and work your way through the entire course the same way one of your students would. Canvas has designed a **Student View** feature that allows you to see exactly what your course will look like to students. To access your course through **Student View**, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Home** link on the left Course Navigation Menu.
2. On the **Home** page, click the **Student View** button above the right Sidebar menu as pictured in the following screenshot. This button also appears in the top-right corner of several other features throughout Canvas. Any time you see this button or the eyeglasses icon on Canvas, you can click it to access **Student View**:

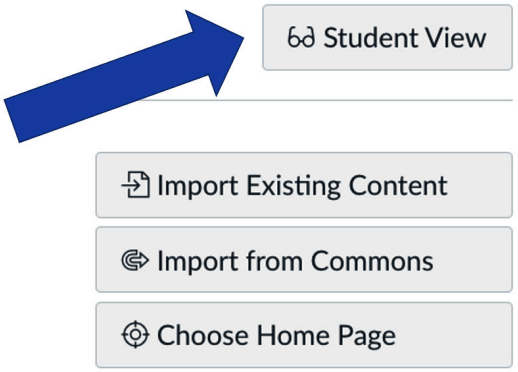


Figure 3.22 – Student View option

3. From there, you will see your Course Home Page in Student View. Notice the message at the bottom of your screen that lets you know **You are currently logged into Student View**.
4. While you are in Student View, you can view all of the areas of your course that your students are able to see. You can even view and submit assignments as a test student, which will show up privately in your Gradebook as a **Test Student** but will not impact the overall real grade calculations for your course. However, keep in mind that anything you post publicly within the course, such as a reply on a discussion post, will be visible to real students under the name **Test Student**.
5. When you have worked your way through your entire course, you are able to reset the test student feature by clicking the **Reset Student** button at the bottom of the screen. This will delete any mock assignments you may have submitted while in Student View and will allow you to view the course fresh as if you were a new student.

6. Once you are finished checking your course in Student View, click the **Leave Student View** button at the bottom of your screen. The screenshot shows the **Reset Student** button and the **Leave Student View** buttons that appear at the bottom of your screen while in Student View:

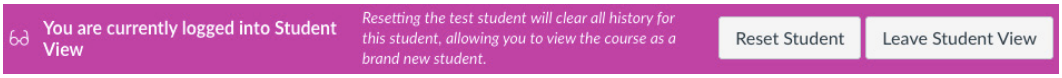


Figure 3.23 – Student View notice and options

Before you publish your course, it is a very good idea to go through your course one final time, either in Student View or in regular view, to make sure your course is totally ready to go live. The following suggestions can be very helpful before publishing your course:

- Double-check that everything is organized in a way that will be most helpful to your students and you during your course and confirm that all of the content your students will need is embedded and ready to go.
- Proofread all of your instructions and double-check all of your due dates and calendar items.

Once you are satisfied that everything in your course is set up accurately and correctly, you are ready to add participants to your course.

Adding participants to the course

Now that the content of your course is created, we can add participants to the course. As we work our way through the process of adding participants to your course, keep in mind that students and observers will not receive anything from you via Canvas until you have published the course. Other types of participants, which we will discuss shortly, may or may not be able to see the course before it is published, depending on the role you assign them within the course. By adding students to the course at this point, you are simply placing their contact information in a queue, which Canvas will use to send out email invitations for the course once you have completed the course design and published it. You can think of this stage of building your course simply as creating your roster before you actually meet your students.

> **Note**
>
> This section deals with manually adding participants to your course, which you may or may not have to do depending on the way your institution has integrated Canvas with its registration systems and technology departments. If your institution has integrated Canvas with its registration system, students and other participants may automatically be placed into your course upon its initial creation. However, if you have manually created the course or if your institution does not automatically create courses and add participants for you, you will need to follow the guidelines in this section to add people to your course.

To add participants to your course, complete these steps:

1. Click on the **People** link of the left Course Navigation Menu.
2. Once you are on the **People** page for your course, you will see a list of individuals already participating in your course. At this point, you will most likely only see yourself listed, unless your institution has automatically added your students for you.
3. Above the list of participants, you will see a search bar to search for individuals, a drop-down menu to limit the types of individuals you would like to view, and a **+ People** button as shown in the following screenshot:

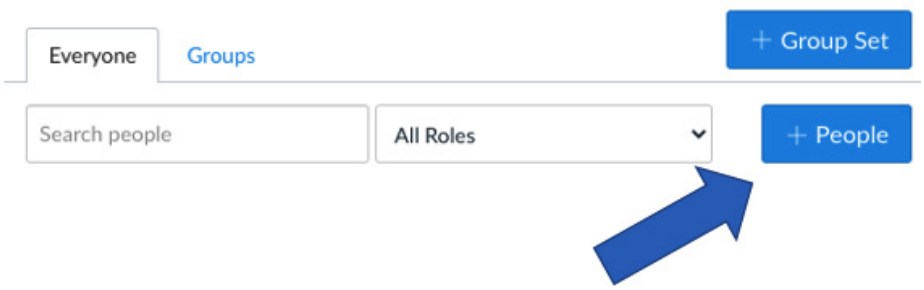


Figure 3.24 – The + People button to add participants

4. Click the **+ People** button and you will see a pop-up window with a textbox where you can paste the information for the students you would like to add to your course. You can choose to add students by **Email Address**, **Login ID**, or **SIS ID** (meaning Student Information System ID).

5. As you add students' contact information, separate each student with a comma or a line break.
6. Once you have entered all of the contact information for people you wish to add to the course, you can select what type of users they will be once they are added to the course. The drop-down menu below the textbox will allow you to add people to the course as a **Student**, a **Teacher**, a **TA** (teacher's assistant), a **Designer**, or an **Observer**. Each of these distinctions will allow participants to function within their designated role for the duration of the course. The standard five roles are discussed here, but keep in mind your institution may have other, customized roles that may be available at your school.

   These role distinctions allow participants to see and do different things within your course, either before or after the course is published:

   Students: Participants added to the course as students will not be able to see the course content until the course is published. Once you publish the course, they will be able to see all of the course content you have made available to them and will be able to submit assignments. They will have a line within the Gradebook (to be discussed in *Chapter 4*, *Teaching Your Canvas Course*). In general, students cannot edit the course content unless you alter the settings to allow them to do so.

   Teachers: Participants added to the course as teachers have all of the same abilities that you do within your course and are able to see the course before and after it is published. They can add and change course content, adjust settings, add or remove users, and grade assignments.

   TAs: Participants added to the course as **teacher's assistants**, referred to within Canvas as **TAs**, are largely able to see and do the same things as teachers within the course, but with the distinction of being the TA for the course. They can add and change course content, adjust settings, add or remove users, and grade assignments. There are, however, a few things that TAs cannot do, such as publishing the course.

   Designers: Participants added to the course as designers are able to see the course before it is published. In most cases, someone would be added as a designer to build the course for you, so they are able to add and change course content, adjust settings, and organize the course. They are not able to see assignment submissions or grade students' work.

Observers: Participants added to the course as observers are not able to see the course until it is published. Observers have most of the same privileges as students, except they cannot submit assignments and they do not receive a line in the Gradebook. You can link observers to specific students, and the observer will be able to see the work for a specific student. An example of when you might add someone to the course as an observer might be an administrator or parent who wants to see how a student is doing in a course, or a prospective student who wants to see what life in an online course at your institution looks like.

7. You should add participants to your course in groups or as individuals based on their role within your course. As such, it would make sense to add all of your students at one time or all of your observers at one time. You can certainly add people individually, as will probably be the case when adding any TAs or designers to your course.
8. Once you have added the contact information and designated the role that the new participants will fulfill in the course, you can click on **Next** at the bottom of the pop-up window.

> **Note**
>
> For now, you can ignore the drop-down option next to **Section**, since we have not yet covered how to set up sections within a Canvas course. We will cover this is in *Chapter 5*, *Exploring Special Features*, when we discuss some of the more unique and specialized features of Canvas.

9. Once you click on **Next**, you should see a message that informs you that the email address you entered have been validated and you are now ready to add those users to the course.

10. Double-check to make sure everyone you intended to add to the course is on the list of validated participants, then click the **Add Users** button at the bottom right of the pop-up window as shown in the following screenshot:

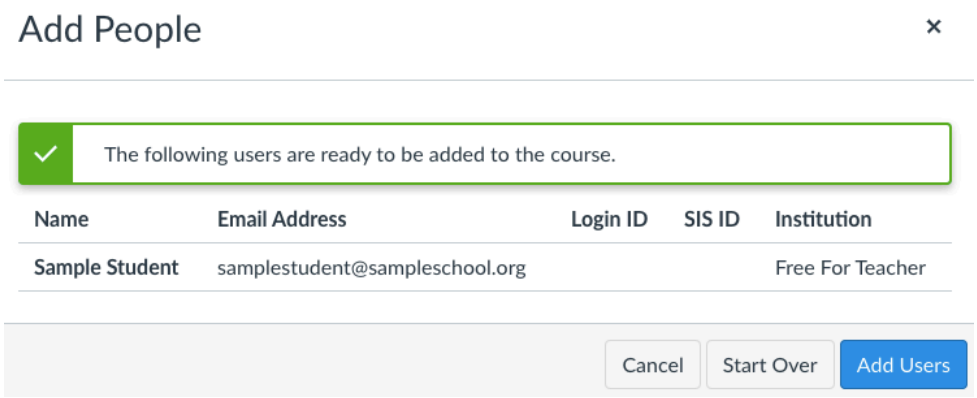


Figure 3.25 – Add Users option

When you have clicked **Add Users**, the pop-up window will close, and you will see the list of new participants appear on the **People** page of your course. You will notice a bubble that reads **Pending** next to all of the new participants' names. Students and observers will not receive an invitation to join the course until you have published it; however, teachers, TAs, and designers will receive an email invitation after you click **Add Users**.

Their status in the course will remain **Pending** until they follow the link in the email to accept their invitation to the course. Once someone has accepted their invitation to join the course, you will see their name on the **People** page without the **Pending** status.

Next, let's discuss managing participants within Canvas and creating user groups once you have added participants to the course.

Managing users

You may find that you need to resend an invitation, edit the sections a participant is involved with, view the details of an individual's participation, or remove a user from the course. To accomplish any of these tasks, complete these steps:

1. Click the **People** button on the left Course Navigation Menu.

2. To manage a participant in your course, click the icon with three vertical dots, and you will see the following menu appear:

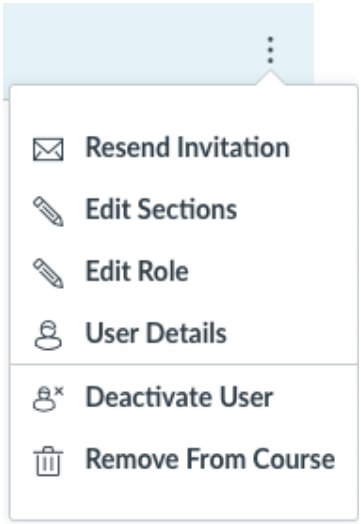


Figure 3.26 – Manage User drop-down menu

3. When you click on **Resend Invitation**, **Edit Sections**, **Edit Role**, **Deactivate User**, or **Remove From Course**, you will see an instructional pop-up window appear that allows you to accomplish the desired task. Keep in mind that if you are using an institutional instance of Canvas that automatically enrolls students, some of these features may not be available to you or may be overridden by your institution's settings.
4. If you would like to know more about a specific participant, click on **User Details** to see information about and adjust settings for individual users. You will be taken to the participant's details page, where you can view their course memberships, manage their privileges, and see their login information.

If you add a participant as an observer, they will be able to see the public course content such as assignment pages or discussions, but they will not be able to see any private content such as assignment submissions or grades. In some situations, you may be adding a participant as an observer to monitor a specific student, for example, a parent, administrator, or tutor. You can *link an observer* to a specific student, which will allow the observer to see the student's grades and interactions within the course. To link an observer to a student, complete the following steps:

1. Click the **People** button on the left Course Navigation Menu.
2. Find the observer you wish to link to a student and click the icon with three vertical dots, then click **Link to Students** from the drop-down menu that appears, as pictured in the following screenshot:

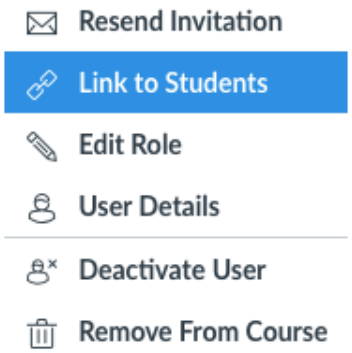


Figure 3.27 – Link to Students option

3. In the pop-up window that appears, type the name of the student to whom you wish to link the observer, and click on the student's name when it appears below the search bar.
4. Once you have selected the student that the observer will be linked to, click **Update**. The observer will now be able to see the student's interactions in the course as well as their assignment submissions and grades. You can remove or adjust the observer's linked student by following the previous steps and changing the student selection in the pop-up window.

Now that you have added users and learned how to manage their roles, let's talk about how you can organize your users into groups if you are planning to incorporate group assignments and collaborations into your course.

Creating user groups

As you are adding users, you may wish to create **user groups** that organize participants and provide space within the course for collaboration between participants who are grouped together. Creating user groups also makes it easy to select groups for group assignments or to message groups of users all at once. This option is not mandatory, so you may skip ahead to the next section if you do not plan on organizing users into groups at any point during your course. To create user groups, follow these steps:

1. Click on the **People** link on the left Course Navigation Menu.
2. On the **People** page, click the **Groups** tab at the top. The page that appears explains what you can do after creating student user groups. Read the explanation, then click the **+ Group Set** button that appears in the top-right corner of the page.
3. A pop-up window will appear that allows you to designate the **Group Set Name**, **Self Sign-Up** permission, and **Group Structure**. When deciding on these preferences, think about the way user groups will function within your course. You may choose to create a group set that you can utilize for a specific group assignment, or you may choose to have certain students work with each other for the entire duration of your course.

   For the **Group Set Name**, choose a name that describes how the user groups will be used. For example, if you will use the groups for a group assignment, consider including the assignment name in the **Group Set Name**.

   If you would like to allow student to sign up for their groups themselves, check the box next to **Allow self sign-up**. Notice that the options for the **Group Structure** in the section below change if you allow self sign-up. You can also choose to **Require group members to be in the same section** if you have different sections of the same course.

   In determining the **Group Structure**, you can have Canvas automatically split students into a certain number of groups, or you can create the groups manually after you have created the group set. If you are allowing self sign-up, you can designate the number of groups within the set as well as how many students can join each group.
4. Click **Save** to create your new group set.

If you elected for Canvas to automatically split students into groups, this will happen now, and you will see the groups once the pop-up window closes. If you elected to create groups manually, you will see a list of unassigned students and an empty group set. To manually create groups within the group set, complete the following steps:

1. Click the grey **+ Group** button in the top-right corner as shown here:



Figure 3.28 – Add Group button

2. In the pop-up window that appears, enter the **Group Name** and the **Group Membership Limit** then click **Save**.
3. To add students to the group, find a student you would like to add to the group on the list of **Unassigned Students** on the left side of the page. To add them to the group, you can click the dots to the left of the student's name then drag them into the group. You can also click the **+** symbol to the right of the student's name and select the group from the pop-up menu that appears.
4. You can continue to add users to the group in the same manner, then create new user groups within the set depending on your needs.

Now that you have added participants and explored how to manage users within your course, we're ready to publish your course.

Publishing your course

Once you've added all of your content, previewed and proofed your course, and added participants, you are ready to **publish** your course! This is the final step to make your course *live* before you start teaching your course. To publish your course, complete the following steps:

1. Click on **Home** on the left Course Navigation Menu.
2. At the top of the right Sidebar menu, you will see the **Course Status** indicating in red that your course is **Unpublished**, as shown here:

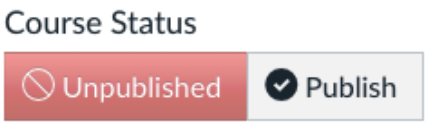


Figure 3.29 – Unpublished course status

3. To publish your course, click on **Publish**. You will see that option turn green and it now reads **Published**, as shown here:

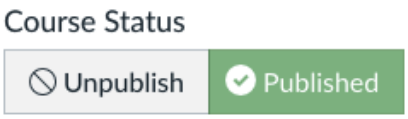


Figure 3.30 – Published course status

Your course is now live! All of the students and observers who have not already received invitations to join the course will receive emails instructing them to join the course. You are now ready to begin teaching your course!

Summary

In this chapter, we completed the construction of your course and prepared it to be published. We began by exploring the various types of **home page layouts** available to you based on your needs, including the Course Activity Stream, the Pages Front Page layout, the Course Modules layout, the Assignment List layout, and the Syllabus layout. Next, we learned how to reorganize the appearance of your course by selecting which **navigation links** your students will see on the left Course Navigation Menu.

After that, we learned about the **calendar** feature as well as the **Student View** option to preview your course. We then learned about **adding participants** to the course and discussed the various roles participants can fulfill within your course: students, teachers, TAs, designers, and observers. We discussed managing participants and creating groups, then we ended with how to **publish** your course.

In *Chapter 4*, *Teaching Your Canvas Course*, we will explore the features of Canvas you will use as you teach your course. We will cover topics including how to communicate with participants in your course through Canvas, how to use the Gradebook, and how to create and facilitate synchronous video meetings.

Section 2: Teaching and Enhancing Your Course

In *Section 2*, you will learn how to communicate with students through Canvas, provide feedback and grades through the Gradebook and Learning Mastery features, and add advanced features to your course.

This section contains the following chapters:

- *Chapter 4*, *Teaching Your Canvas Course*
- *Chapter 5*, *Exploring Special Features*
- *Chapter 6*, *Utilizing and Integrating Apps*

4
Teaching Your Canvas Course

Now that you've built your course, you can look forward to your planning and hard work paying off. From this point on, we begin the actual teaching of your course, where your finely honed skills as an educator will guide you and your students through the course content to success. While the Canvas platform for teaching and learning may be new to you, it is important to keep in mind everything you know from being a real live teacher. Keep the basics in mind; try to find ways to get to know your students, maintain open communication, deliver insightful feedback, and provide opportunities to field questions and concerns. As you begin to teach your course, we will cover the following in this chapter:

- Communicating with participants through the **Inbox** feature
- Posting **Announcements**
- Providing feedback and grades
- Setting up synchronous meetings using Conferences

Everything you know from your experience as an educator can and should transfer to your Canvas course, and this chapter will help you make that happen through the medium of Canvas.

Technical requirements

To complete this chapter, you will need the following:

- A computer with internet access
- A Canvas account (see *Chapter 1*, *Getting Started with Canvas*)
- A Canvas course with course content created (see *Chapter 2*, *Building Your Canvas Course,* and *Chapter 3*, *Getting Ready to Launch Your Course*)

Communicating through the Inbox feature

To facilitate direct communication with participants, the **Inbox** feature in Canvas allows you to send messages directly to individual users or to groups of users. The **Inbox** feature functions in a very similar manner to most email interfaces. Canvas organizes individual messages into conversations based upon the users involved in the exchange, so in the following sections the term *message* refers to an individual entry of a *conversation*.

Most of the messages that appear in the **Inbox** feature of Canvas are messages that participants send directly to one another. However, as you get further into your course, you will notice that other messages, such as comments left on submitted assignments, also appear in your inbox. The following sections will help familiarize you with the layout of the **Inbox** feature as well as how to compose, send, and organize conversations.

Learning the layout of the inbox

To access your inbox, click on the **Inbox** icon on the left Global Navigation Menu. Notice that when you have a new message waiting in your inbox, you will see a notification bubble next to the **Inbox** icon indicating how many new messages you have. The following screenshot displays the **Inbox** icon as well as a new message notification:

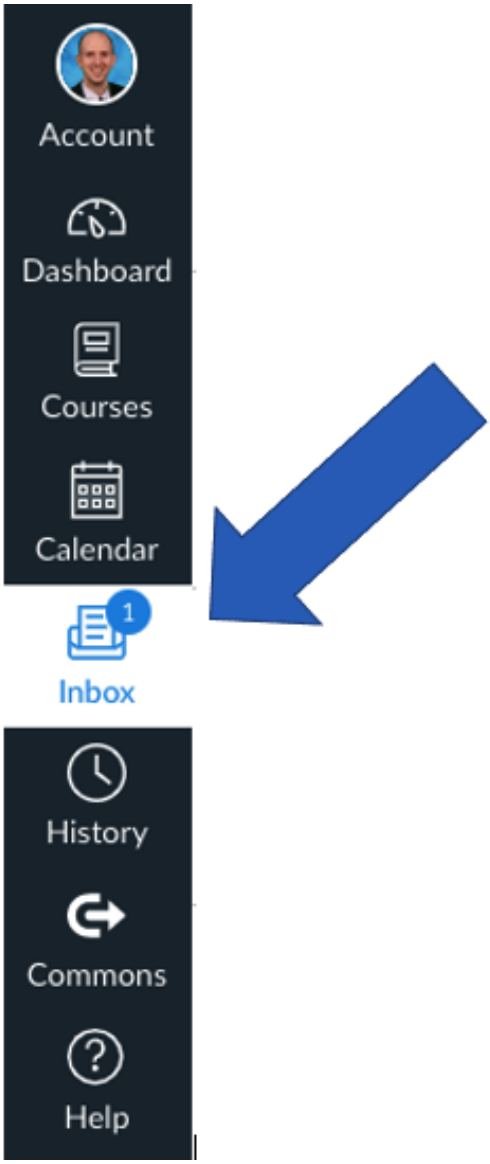


Figure 4.1 – Inbox icon with new message notification

When the **Inbox** page opens, you will see two main parts to the screen. On the left side, you will see the list of conversations with which you are involved. On the right side of your screen, you will see the actual message body with the thread of messages contained within the selected conversation. As a brand new Canvas user, you will most likely not be involved with any conversations, so the list of conversations on the left side of your screen will appear blank.

Once you begin receiving messages, the list of conversations will grow to display each conversation with which you are involved. Note that you will not see the messages within a conversation until you click on the conversation from the list of conversations on the left. The following screenshot shows the top menu of the conversations page as well as a list of conversations on the left side and a **No Conversations Selected** message on the right side where the message body would appear:

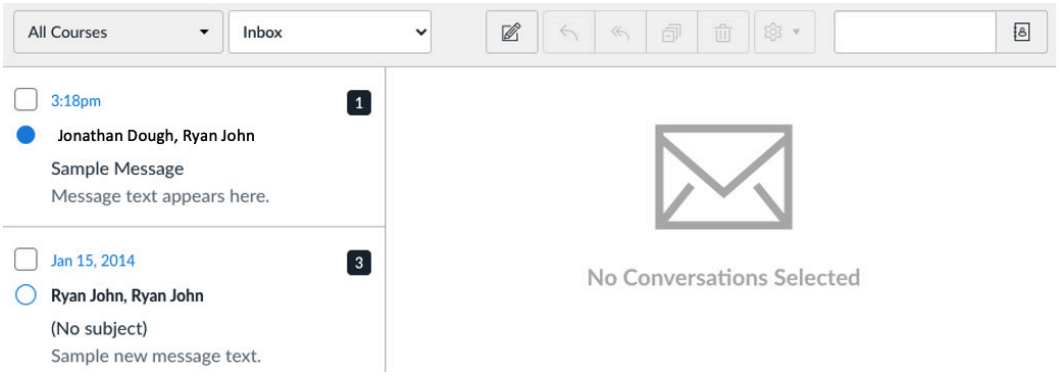


Figure 4.2 – The Inbox feature's layout

The first item on the left side of the top menu on the **Inbox** page is a drop-down menu that allows you to view messages from **All Courses** or to select a specific course from which you would like to view messages. This feature can help you stay organized if you are teaching multiple courses using Canvas, as you will be able to focus in on viewing or responding to messages from users in one course at a time.

The next option to the right is a drop-down menu that allows you to select which kinds of conversations you are viewing. The following list describes what types of messages fall under each option of this drop-down menu:

- **Inbox**: Selecting this option will display all conversations with which you are involved.
- **Unread**: Selecting this option will display all conversations containing new messages you have not yet read.

- **Starred**: Selecting this option will display all conversations that you have starred, or marked as important. We will learn how to star conversations shortly.
- **Sent**: Selecting this option will display all of the messages you have sent to other participants.
- **Archived**: Selecting this option will display all messages you have archived, or stored away out of your inbox. We will learn how to archive and unarchive conversations shortly.
- **Submission Comments**: Selecting this option will display all comments posted on individual student submissions for assignments or activities.

As you become more comfortable using the **Inbox** feature of Canvas, you will develop your own organizational style for maintaining your inbox in the same way you probably have with any email accounts you use. These options will help you quickly and easily find what you are looking for as you begin sending and receiving messages with users in your courses.

To the right of the drop-down menus, you will see a number of icons that allow you to complete various tasks involving your conversations. These icons offer many of the same functions as a standard email client, including **Compose a new message**, **Reply**, **Reply all**, **Archive**, **Delete**, and **More options**. Hover your mouse over each icon to see a text description of the icon. These icons will be the central part of your message experience, as they allow you to complete all of the basic tasks required to send and receive messages using Canvas. If an icon appears as a grey outline, you will need to select a message before that option will become available.

At the right side of the top menu, you will see a search bar to **Search for recipients**. This feature can be very helpful for quickly finding a conversation with a specific participant, especially if the message or conversation is not very recent. Now that we have familiarized ourselves with the layout of the **Inbox** page, let's move on to composing and sending messages to other Canvas users.

Composing and sending a message

To compose a new message, perform the following steps:

1. On the top menu of the **Inbox** page, click the **Compose a new message** icon as pictured in the following screenshot:

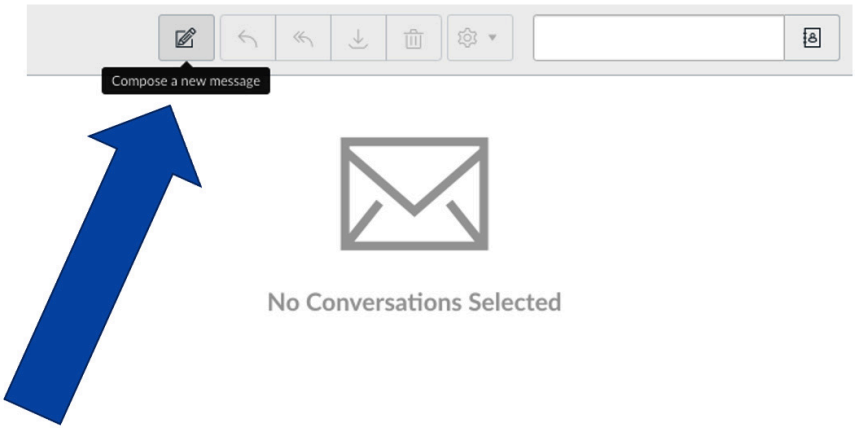


Figure 4.3 – Compose a new message icon

2. In the pop-up window that appears, select the course in which the user or users you would like to message are participating from the drop-down menu. Note that unpublished courses will not appear as an option here until they are published. The course drop-down menu is shown in the following screenshot:

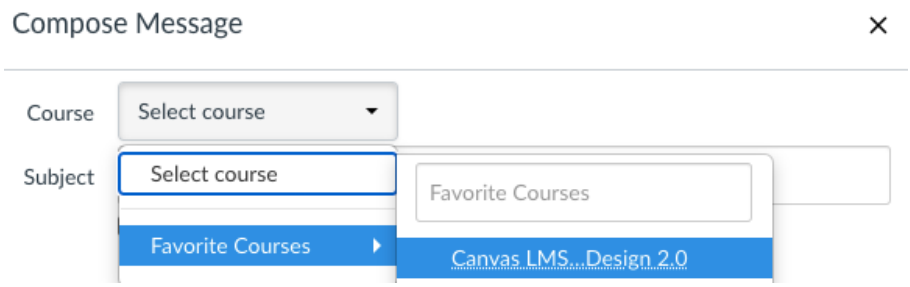


Figure 4.4 – Select the desired course for your new message

3. Next, type in the name or names of the users you wish to send a message to in the **To** field. Alternately, if you click on the icon to the right of the **To** field, you can find and choose users from the options that appear. Note that the top **All in…** option from this drop-down menu will not send you a copy of the message, but you can always view your sent messages in the **Sent** folder on the **Inbox** home page. The **To** options are pictured in the following screenshot:

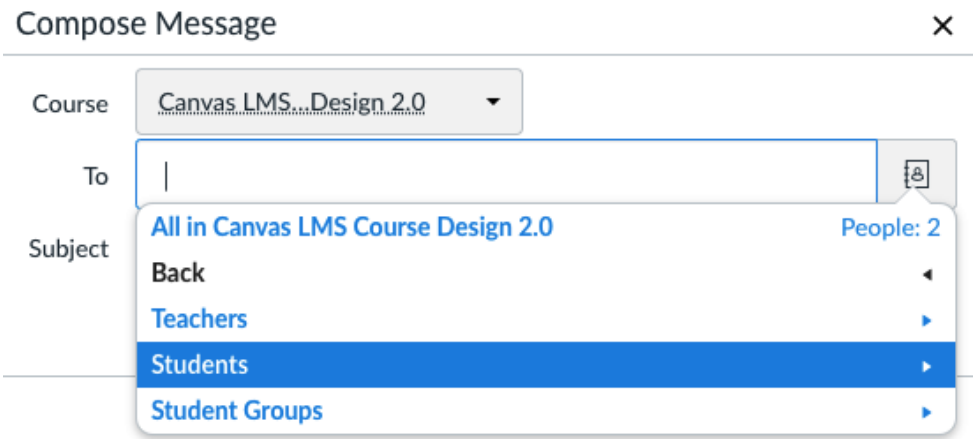


Figure 4.5 – Type participant names or select from drop-down recipient options

4. Once you have selected the desired user or users to be included in the message, enter the topic of your message in the **Subject** field.
5. If you are sending a message to multiple users and would like to disable the reply all feature, you can check the box next to **Send individual messages**. This essentially functions in the same way as the **Blind Carbon Copy** (**BCC**) feature in standard email clients.
6. Next, you can type the text of your message in the large textbox at the bottom of the pop-up window.
7. When the text of your message is complete, you may choose to **Add an attachment** or **Record an audio or video comment** by clicking the icons in the bottom-left corner of the pop-up window. The **Add an attachment** option will open the documents folder of your computer, from which you can select the desired attachment. The **Record an audio or video comment** option below the textbox will open the same dialogue box as you saw in the **Media** option within the Rich Content Editor that we discussed in *Chapter 2*, *Building Your Canvas Course*. Using this feature, you can record a new audio or video comment or upload an existing audio or video file to send along with your message.
8. When you are satisfied with your message, click the **Send** button in the bottom-right corner of the pop-up window to send it to the specified users.

Now that we have learned how to compose and send a new message, let's discuss options for keeping your inbox organized.

Organizing your inbox

When your course has started, you will begin receiving messages from users in your course through the **Inbox** feature of Canvas. In order to maintain open and prompt communication with participants in your course, you should make sure to keep your conversations organized. The first two drop-down menus on the top menu of the conversations page will help you keep track of conversations that fall under various categories. The following section focuses on the organizing conversations into the options of the second drop-down menu: **Unread**, **Starred**, **Sent**, **Archived**, and **Submission comments**.

Marking conversations as unread

As we discussed while learning the layout of the **Inbox** feature, the **Inbox** link on the left Global Navigation Menu of Canvas will alert you to new messages by displaying a circle icon next to the **Inbox** link that shows the number of new messages you have received. On the **Inbox** page, you will see a blue dot to the left of each conversation containing a new message, such as the conversation in the following screenshot:

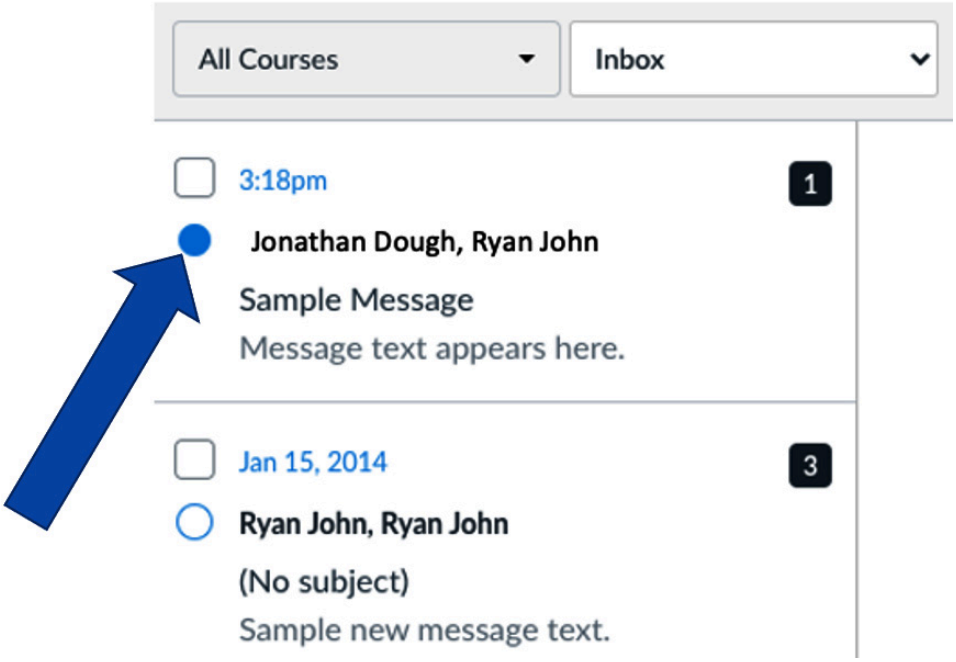


Figure 4.6 – Blue dot indicating a new message within the inbox

After you have selected and read a new message, this blue dot will disappear. If you would like to mark the conversation as **Unread** again, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the circle outline next to the participant names in the conversation you wish to **Mark as unread**, as shown in the following screenshot:

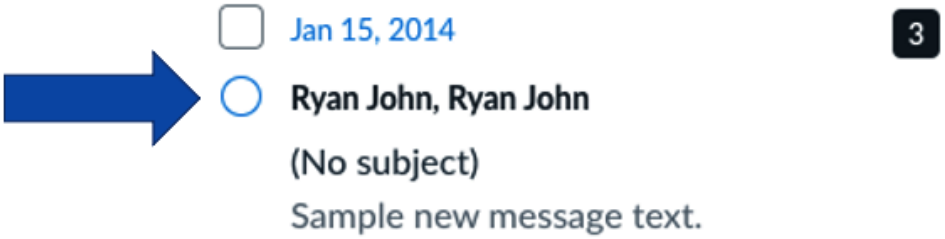


Figure 4.7 – Read/unread icon

2. Once you click the circle outline, the circle will turn blue again and the conversation will be marked as unread. It will appear if you select **Unread** from the second drop-down filter at the top of the page.
3. You can also mark a conversation as unread by clicking the square next to the date of the conversation, clicking the **More options** icon from the top menu, then selecting **Mark as unread** from the drop-down menu that appears, as shown in the following screenshot:

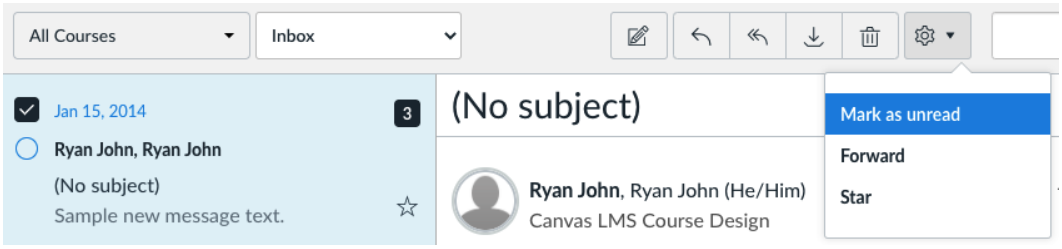


Figure 4.8 – Mark conversation as unread from the More options drop-down menu

Let's look at another way to make note of important messages by starring a conversation.

Starring conversations

When you hover your mouse over a conversation, you will see the outline of a star appear at the bottom-right corner of the message header. You can *star* a particularly important message or a message that requires further response or follow-up. This option serves the same purpose as flagging a message in many standard email clients. To star a message, complete the following steps:

1. Hover your mouse over the conversation you wish to star.
2. Click on the outline of a star that appears at the bottom-right corner of the message header as shown:

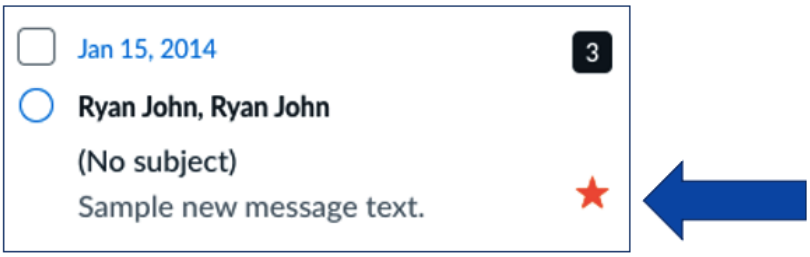


Figure 4.9 – Click the star icon to star a conversation

3. Once you click on the star outline, a yellow star will appear, and the conversation will be *starred*. The conversation will now appear if you select **Starred** from the second drop-down menu on the top menu.
4. You can also star a conversation by selecting the conversation, clicking the **More options** icon on the top menu, and then selecting **Star** from the drop-down menu that appears, as seen in the following screenshot:

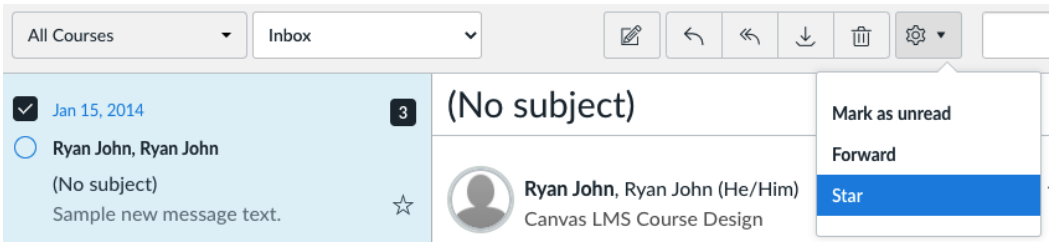


Figure 4.10 – Star a conversation from the More options drop-down menu

Now that we have covered marking conversations as unread or starring conversations, we will next explore how to view messages you have sent to other participants.

Viewing sent messages

Should you wish to view messages that you have sent, select **Sent** on the second drop-down menu on the top menu. This will show you all messages that you have sent within any conversations with which you are involved.

Archiving and unarchiving conversations

As you are viewing and responding to messages, you may wish to archive certain conversations. Archiving conversations removes them from your inbox and the list of conversations but does not delete them. To archive a conversation, complete the following steps:

1. Find the conversation you wish to archive from the list of conversations on the left side of your screen. Click the square next to the date of the conversation to select it; a check mark will appear once the conversation is selected.
2. Click the **Archive** icon on the top menu, as pictured in the following screenshot:

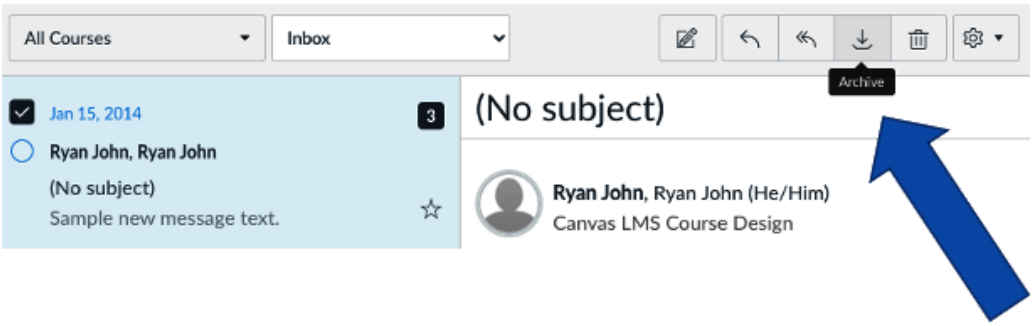


Figure 4.11 – The Archive icon

3. The conversation will be removed from your inbox and will appear if you select **Archived** from the second drop-down menu on the top menu.

If you need to unarchive a conversation, complete the following steps:

4. Select **Archived** from the second drop-down menu on the top menu.
5. Find the conversation you wish to move back to your **Inbox** and select it from the list of conversations on the left.

6. Once the conversation is selected, click the **Unarchive** icon, which is pictured in the following screenshot:

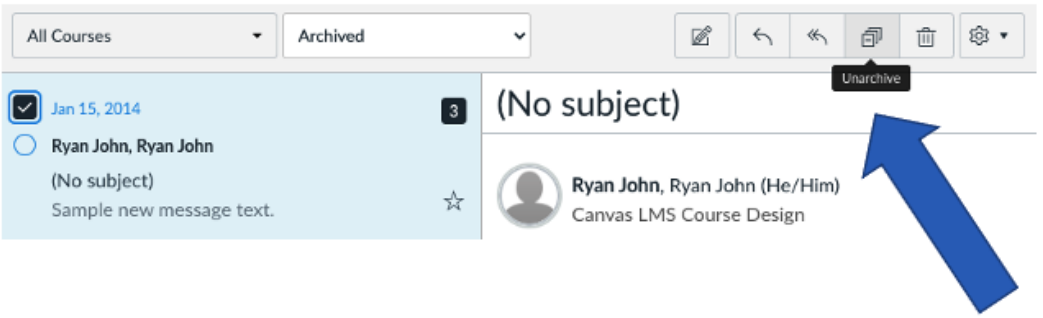


Figure 4.12 – The Unarchive icon

7. Once you click the **Unarchive** icon, the conversation will be moved back to your inbox.

Instead of archiving a conversation, you can delete a conversation if you are sure you will not need the conversation again in the future.

Deleting conversations

Once you have read and responded to messages within a conversation, you may wish to delete your copy of the conversation. Note that when you delete a conversation, you only delete the conversation from your account. The messages within the conversation will still be available to other users involved with a conversation. Also note that deleting a conversation is permanent and you will not be able to access the conversation again. To delete a conversation, complete the following steps:

1. Click the square next to the date of the conversation you want to delete to select it; a check mark will appear once the conversation is selected.
2. Click the **Delete** icon that looks like a trashcan on the top menu of the conversations page.
3. You may see a pop-up message asking if you are sure you want to delete your copy of the conversation. The message indicates that this action cannot be undone. If you are sure you would like to delete the conversation, click **OK**. This message may look different depending on the web browser you are using.
4. After you have clicked the **Delete** icon and confirmed your action, the message will no longer be available to you.

Now that we've looked at how to communicate directly with users in your course, let's move on to communicating publicly with everyone in your course using the announcements feature.

Posting announcements

The **Announcements** feature of Canvas allows you to post information publicly in your course. Posting announcements is a quick and easy way to communicate with all participants in your class. The information you post can then be easily referenced from the **Announcements** navigation link on the left Course Navigation menu within your course.

To make an announcement, complete the following steps:

1. Navigate to the home page of your course.
2. Click on the **Announcements** tab on the left Course Navigation menu.
3. In the top-right corner of the page that opens, you will see a **+ Announcement** button. Click this option, and a page will open up with the Rich Content Editor that will allow you to add the content of your announcement.
4. In the **Topic Title** bar at the top of the new announcement, type in the title of the announcement you would like to make.
5. In the textbox of the Rich Content Editor, enter the information you would like to post publicly within your course.
6. You can adjust the options below the textbox as you see fit to **Delay posting**, **Allow users to comment**, **Enable podcast feed**, and **Allow liking**. Note that an announcement posted in an unpublished course will be visible to users once the course is published, but users will not receive a notification of the announcement. You can choose the **Delay posting** option underneath the announcement and choose a posting date that is after the course will be published if you want to ensure that users are notified of the announcement.
7. When you are satisfied with your post, click **Save** in the bottom-right corner.

When you have posted your announcement, it will appear on the **Announcements** page of your course. If you had previously hidden the **Announcements** page on your Course Navigation menu, posting an announcement will automatically make that page visible to participants in your course. Announcements have the same features and functionality as a discussion board post, so participants in the course will be able to reply to the post with comments (unless you decide to select the **Close for comments** option). You can edit your announcement or adjust the options for your announcement using the **Edit** button in the top-right corner of your announcement on the **Announcements** page.

To ensure that participants in your course have a positive and productive experience, it is best to utilize the communication features of Canvas consistently and predictably. You may choose to only use the inbox or announcements features of Canvas individually, or you may wish to convey certain types of information to participants through a combination of both features.

Establishing open communication with your students in the beginning of your course is very important, as is maintaining open communication with participants when you begin grading their assignments using the Gradebook and SpeedGrader features of Canvas, which we will cover next.

Providing feedback and grades

When students begin submitting assignments for your course, you will need to start viewing, assessing, and grading their assignments as well as offering them feedback on their work. Depending on the type of course you are teaching, submissions may be electronic or in hard copy, and your feedback to students may be electronic or in person.

Accessing the Gradebook and entering grades

The **Gradebook** in Canvas has all the basic functionality of a traditional analog Gradebook, but it offers you a wide range of options that a traditional Gradebook cannot. To access the Gradebook, click on the **Grades** link of the left Course Navigation menu within a course. Once the Gradebook has opened, you will see a grid with students' names along the left side, as shown in the following screenshot:

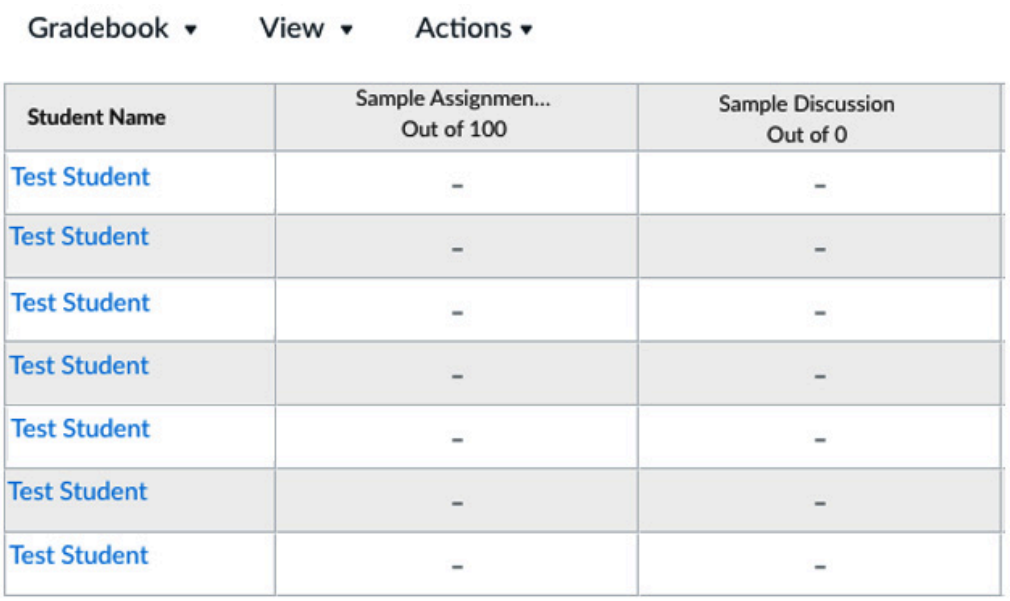


Figure 4.13 – Sample Gradebook layout

In the center of the **Gradebook** grid, you will see assignment names listed across the top, with students' grades for each assignment listed underneath next to their names. If students have made submissions for particular assignments, you will see an icon indicating their submission within the **Gradebook** grid. Different icons appear for different assignment submission types – you can hover your mouse over any unfamiliar icons for a text description of the icon's function.

For assignments that have not yet been submitted, you will see a dash. In the following screenshot, the icons under **Sample Assignment** indicates an ungraded submission, the dash under **Sample Discussion** indicates that the student has not yet made a submission, and the **95** under **Sample Quiz** indicates the graded score:

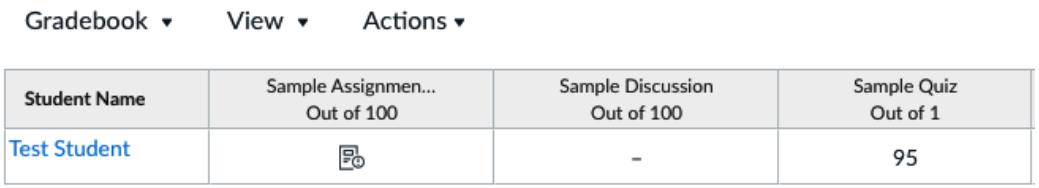


Figure 4.14 – Sample Gradebook icons and scores

To manually enter or change a grade within the **Gradebook** grid, click on the grade or dash under the assignment you wish to adjust. The grade or dash will turn into a textbox in which you will be able to manually type in the grade then press *Enter* or *Return* on your keyboard to save. For example, if you were to click on the dash under **Sample Discussion** in the previous screenshot, you would be able to enter a point value then save it by pressing *Enter*.

You will also notice you have the option to use the up and down arrows that appear next to the textbox to adjust points for the grade instead of typing the grade in manually. Each type of assignment has a variety of grading options. For example, certain quiz types such as multiple choice, true/false, or fill-in-the-blank are automatically graded when students complete them. Quizzes with essay or short answer responses will require manual grading through SpeedGrader, which we will discuss shortly.

Along the right side of the **Gradebook**, you will see the total averages for each assignment group as well as the students' overall average for all of their completed assignments. The following screenshot indicates the percent average for each assignment group as well as the student's total average for all completed assignments:

Assignments 70% of grade	Classwork 30% of grade	**Total**
85%	100%	89.5%

Figure 4.15 – Sample Gradebook totals

Once you begin using the Gradebook, you may wish to use the options available above the Gradebook grid to organize and adjust the viewing options for your **Gradebook**. The drop-down arrows next to **Gradebook**, **View**, and **Actions** above the **Gradebook** grid will show various options to customize how you interact with the **Gradebook**. Some of the available options include viewing the **Gradebook History**, changing how the **Gradebook** is arranged, or importing content into the **Gradebook**. As an example, the **View** drop-down is shown in the following screenshot:

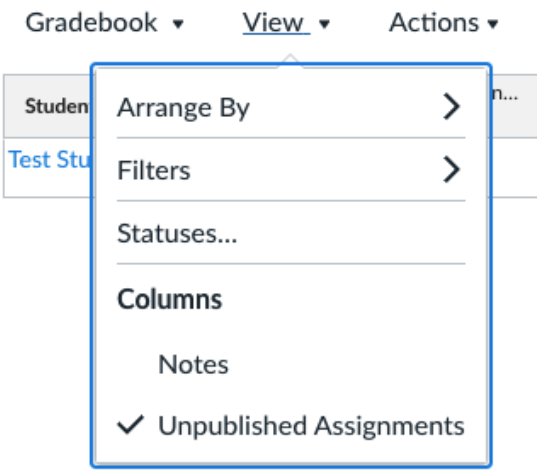


Figure 4.16 – View options for the Gradebook

To further customize how the **Gradebook** functions, you can adjust the settings for each column (representing graded activities in the course) of the **Gradebook** grid. If you click the icon with three vertical dots that appears next to the heading of each column, a drop-down menu will open with a number of options pictured in the following screenshot:

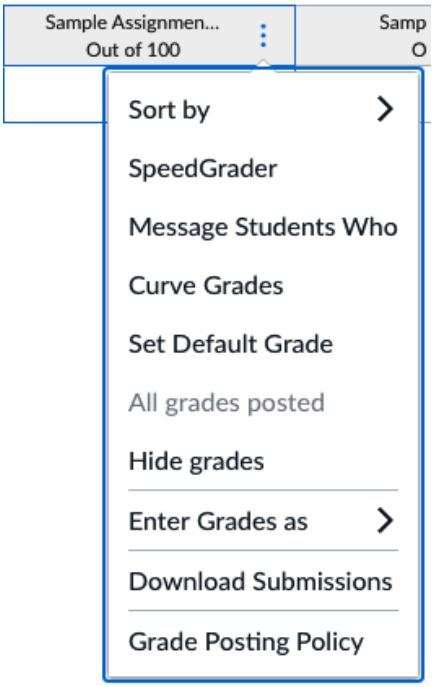


Figure 4.17 – Gradebook column/assignment options

You may also wish to adjust the overall settings for your **Gradebook**, which can be accessed by clicking the gear icon in the top-right corner of the Gradebook, as shown in the following screenshot:

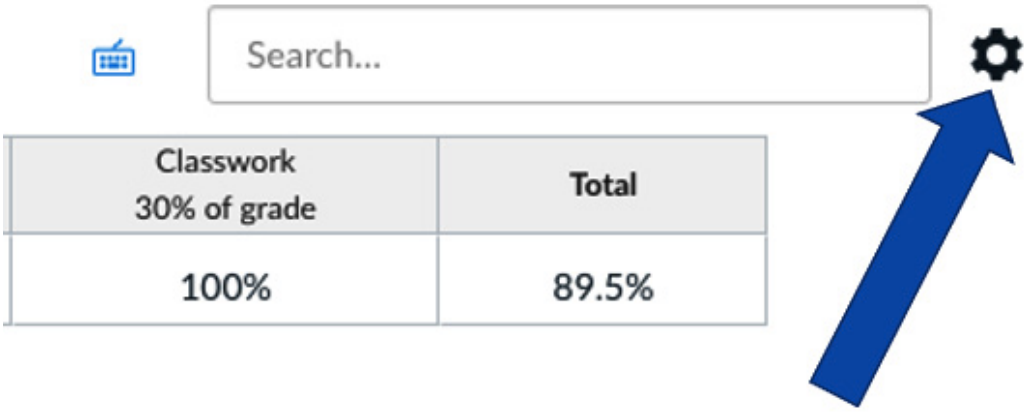


Figure 4.18 – Gradebook settings icon

When you click on the **Gradebook** settings icon, a pop-up window will appear with tabs to adjust your **Late Policies**, **Grade Posting Policy**, and **Advanced** options. Note that empty grade cells for missing assignments do not factor into a student's grade by default, but you could open the Gradebook settings to adjust the **Late Policies** settings to calculate missing submissions as a certain point value instead of leaving them out. You may use these features to adjust these policies and set your **Gradebook** preferences to your liking.

Now that you are more familiar with the layout of the **Gradebook** and how to manually enter grades into the **Gradebook** grid, let's move on to accessing students' online submissions through SpeedGrader. For assignments that require online submissions, you will need to open SpeedGrader to view the submission and utilize the grading options for various assignments.

Accessing and using SpeedGrader

SpeedGrader in Canvas allows you to quickly view students' submissions, assess their work, enter a grade, and offer feedback for individual assignments. To view student submissions in SpeedGrader from the Gradebook, click on the icon with three vertical dots next to the assignment you wish to view in SpeedGrader. Select **SpeedGrader** from the drop-down menu that appears, as shown in the following screenshot:

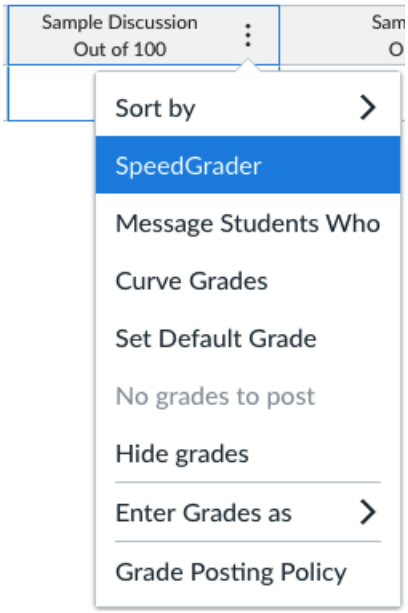


Figure 4.19 – SpeedGrader option from the Gradebook assignment drop-down menu

Tip

You can also access SpeedGrader from the assignment or activity page or from the **To Do** list that appears on your Canvas dashboard and on the home pages for each course you teach. The **To Do** list appears on the right side of the Canvas dashboard or Course Home Page above the **Coming Up** section. As students submit assignments, you will see the name of each assignment appear under your **To Do** list along with the number of assignments that need to be graded. To open SpeedGrader for assignments that need to be graded, you can click on the assignment link that appears on your **To Do** list.

Once you have opened SpeedGrader, you will see three main sections of the screen that allow you to complete various tasks for grading an assignment. Perform the following steps to utilize each section of the screen in grading your assignments:

1. Across the top of the **SpeedGrader** page, you will find icons for the **Gradebook**, **Post or Hide Grades**, and **Settings** along with specifics for the selected assignment, how many submissions you have graded, and the class average for the assignment. The following screenshot shows the top menu of SpeedGrader:



Figure 4.20 – Top menu of the SpeedGrader

In the top-right corner, you will see the student's name displayed with arrows on either side. If you click on these arrows, you can navigate through all of the students' submissions for the selected assignment.

2. On the bottom-left side of the SpeedGrader page, you will see the student's submission. Along the top of any text or image submissions, you will see a menu with options to annotate the submissions, which will allow you to provide specific feedback for students to view. If you hover over each icon, you will see descriptions of each function, including **Download annotated PDF**, **Rotate**, **Zoom**, **Fullscreen**, **Select**, **Point**, **Highlight**, **Freetext**, **Strikeout**, **Free Draw**, and **Area annotation**. A sample submission with the annotations menu and sample annotations is shown in the following screenshot:

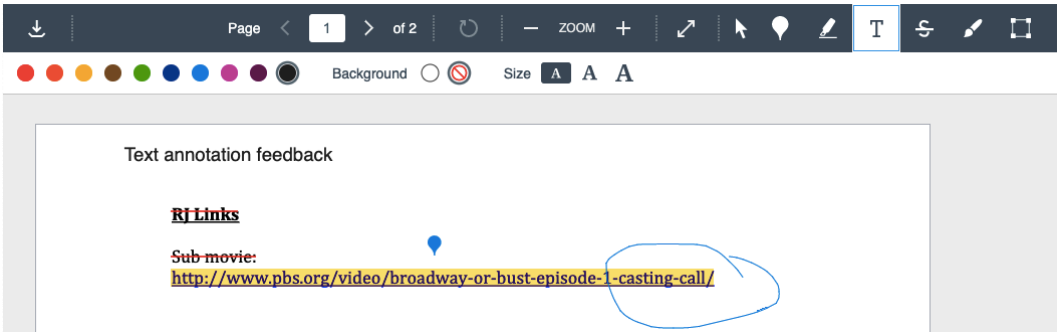


Figure 4.21 – Annotations menu with sample submission and annotations

3. On the right side of the **SpeedGrader** page, you will see the assessment and feedback section, where you can view the submission date/time, download submitted files, enter a grade, and leave written feedback for the individual student. Notice you have the option to add a **File Attachment** or **Media Comment**, or utilize **Speech Recognition** to dictate your comment. The following screenshot displays the assessment and feedback options that appear on the right side of SpeedGrader:

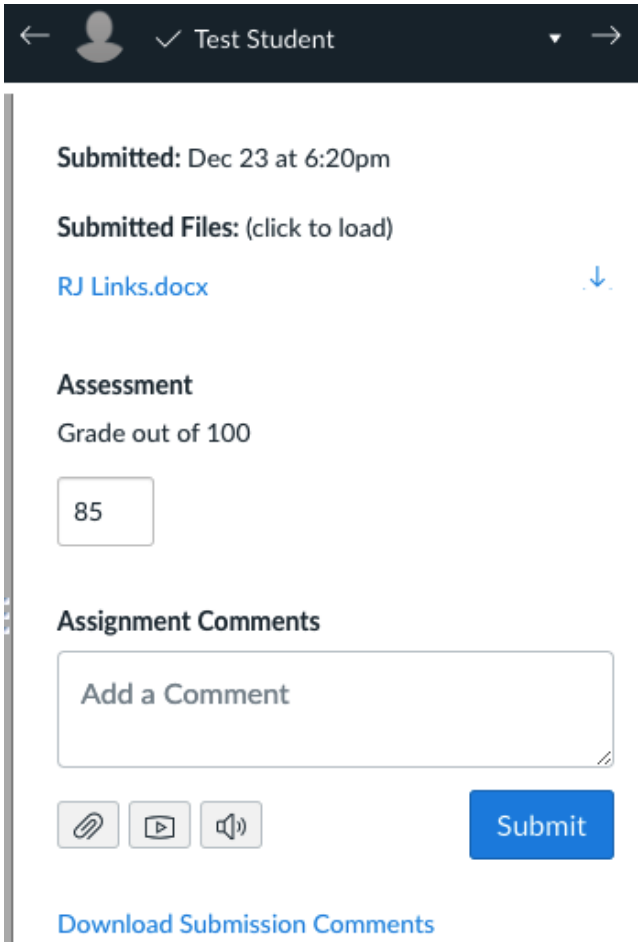


Figure 4.22 – Assessment and feedback options of the SpeedGrader

4. Note that when you **Add a Comment** to a submission, the student receives a notification to check your comment, but they do not receive a notification if you only add **Annotations** to their submitted file. To ensure that a student sees your annotations, it is a good idea to leave a comment on the assignment instructing them to check the annotated file for their feedback.
5. When you have finished reviewing the submission, assigning a grade, and providing feedback, you can click the **Submit** button to save any written feedback and then click the arrows to the right or left of the student's name in the top-left corner to move to the next submission. SpeedGrader autosaves your grades, so if you do not need to leave a written comment, you can enter the grade then navigate to the next student's assignment and your work will automatically be saved.

6. When you have finished grading all submissions for a particular assignment, you can use the icon at the top left of the page to navigate back to the Gradebook.

> **Note**
>
> If you would like to download all of the submissions that students have made for a particular assignment, you can click the icon with three vertical dots by the assignment in the Gradebook, then select **Download Submissions** from the drop-down menu that appears. Alternately, you can navigate to the assignment page and click the **Download Submissions** link that appears on the right side menu of the assignment page.
>
> All of the submission files will download to your computer in a `.zip` file, at which point you can open each submission to make comments or corrections in your preferred program. You can then re-zip the folder with the adjusted files, return to the assignment page, and click the **Re-Upload Submissions** link that now appears on the right side menu. Once you have re-uploaded the altered submissions, students will receive a copy of their submission with your comments or corrections.

As you work through your students' assignment submissions, keep in mind the kind of feedback that you traditionally offer. Most likely, you are used to giving written feedback on assignments, which you have the capability of doing directly within Canvas. Since Canvas offers you the ability to record audio or video feedback, consider taking advantage of this unique opportunity to connect with the auditory learners or interpersonally motivated learners you may have in your classes.

After you have viewed an assignment submission and assigned a grade, you might consider starting an audio or video recording as you verbally speak your feedback for your students, then attach that recording to their assignment. This is a wonderful opportunity to reach out to students who do best when processing information aurally or by making personal connections through seeing a video of you speaking directly to them. Canvas allows you to reach a wider variety of students through the features it offers, so make sure to take advantage of those opportunities as they arise during your course.

In addition to offering assignment feedback, you can consider setting up synchronous online meetings with your class through the conferences feature.

Setting up synchronous meetings using Conferences

If you are teaching a fully online course or a hybrid course with in-person and online students, synchronous online meetings during which all members of your class are present online can be a huge benefit to the teaching and learning the takes place within your course. A synchronous online meeting through the conferences feature allows all students and teachers involved in your course to participate in a virtual classroom. Each member of the class logs in to the conference and connects to everyone else in the class; you are free to lead a presentation or lecture during this time, or to open the conference up to group discussions and questions.

You can record meetings so students who are not able to be present are still able to see what happened during the meeting. Students are also able to set up their own conferences, so means of collaboration and cooperation are built into your students' Canvas experience. Synchronous meetings afford students the opportunity for direct contact with you and their classmates in a real-time setting. Conferences allow you to personalize learning and build community among you and your students, regardless of physical location.

Creating a Conference

To set up a **Conference**, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Conferences** link on the left side menu of your course.
2. On the **Conferences** page, you will see **+ Conference** button in the top left of the page. Click this button to open a pop-up window that will allow you to set up a new conference.

   The pop-up window that appears will allow you to configure the following elements of your conference:

   The **Name** of your conference.

   The **Type** of conference you would like to create. This option refers to the external conferencing service you would like to use for your conference. Canvas has partnered with Big Blue Button as a conferencing service, so Big Blue Button will likely appear as the default conferencing service for you to use. You may see other conferencing options available depending on the services your institution has integrated into Canvas.

   The **Duration** of your conference.

Options to **Record** your conference and to allow **No Time Limit** for long-running conferences.

A **Description** of your conference. This is the best place to include information about the **Date**, **Time**, and **Duration** of your conference to ensure that all participants in your course are present for the conference. You may wish to post an announcement or send out a message to all of the participants in your course.

The option to **Invite All Course Members** to the conference and/or to **Remove All Course Observer Members**.

3. Once you have adjusted all of the conference specifications to your liking, you can click the **Update** button in the bottom-right corner of the pop-up window. After you have created the conference, invited participants will receive a notification about the conference (depending on their notification settings) and the conference will be listed under the **New Conferences** section of the **Conferences** page.

> **Note**
> At the time of writing, the Free for Teachers instance of Canvas utilizes Big Blue Button as the default option for Conferences, though Canvas has planned to partner with Microsoft Teams as a conferencing option moving forward and it may be available for some instances of Canvas. For information about setting up conferences with Microsoft Teams, you can check the Canvas Guides for up-to-date guidance as we will discuss in *Chapter 7*, *Where to Go for Help*.

Now that we have set up a conference, let's discuss what to do to start and run your synchronous meeting.

Starting and facilitating your conference

To start your conference, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Start** button that appears to the right of the conference name under **New Conferences**, as shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 4.23 – Start button for conferences

2. When you click on the **Start** button, a new tab or window will open in your web browser, and you will be taken to the Big Blue Button conferencing service website (or to a different conferencing service that you or your institution may have configured to work within Canvas). Note that students will not be able to join the conference until after you click **Start**. While the following section will show you how to facilitate a conference using Big Blue Button as an example, the functions covered appear in most standard conferencing services and will help you better understand the possibilities of synchronous meetings.
3. The new tab or window that opens in your web browser will log you in to the conference. You will see a dialogue box appear, as shown in *Figure 4.24*, which asks how you would like to join the audio of the meeting. You should select **Microphone**, and then you will see a pop-up window requesting permission to access your computer's built-in microphone. In order to participate in and facilitate the conference, you will need to click **Allow** so the service can access your microphone and webcam:

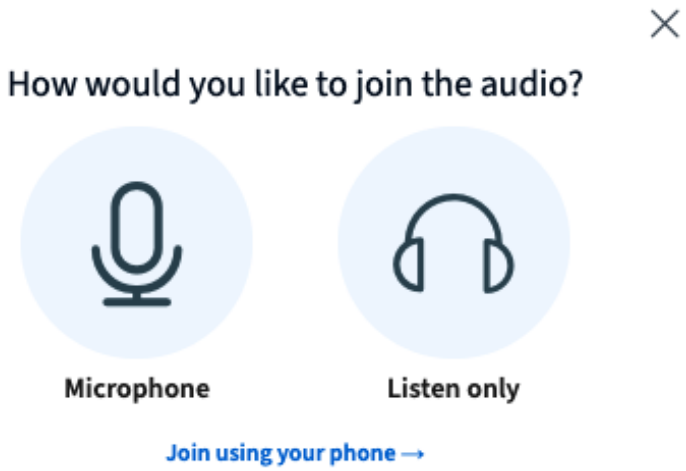


Figure 4.24 – Join audio options for a conference

4. Once you have clicked **Allow** to enable the use of your microphone, you will see an audio test to check that your microphone is working. Follow the onscreen instructions to complete the test and troubleshoot any issues. Once you have completed the audio test, you will be added to the conference.
5. When you have joined the conference, you will either hear other participants who are already in the conference, or you will hear a message informing you that you are the only person in the conference so far.

> **Note**
>
> Notice that when you hover your mouse over any item within the Big Blue Button page, an information box will pop up next to your cursor telling you what the item is similar to most icons and features throughout Canvas. Use this to your advantage as you explore the conferencing screen to see what your options are.

The layout of the conferencing screen is broken down into a number of separate sections. First, in the center right of your screen, you will see the presentation area. All participants videos will appear here during the meeting when their webcams are turned on. This is also where participants will see any content that is being shared from a presenter's screen.

The menu along the bottom of the presentation area allows you to control how you are participating in the conference, including **Actions** you can take, **Mute** or **Unmute** your microphone, **Leave** or **Join Audio**, turn your **Webcam** on or off, and to **Share** or **Stop sharing your screen**. The following screenshot displays the bottom menu of Big Blue Button:

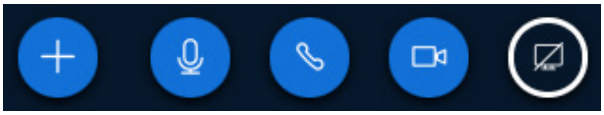


Figure 4.25 – Control options

> **Note**
>
> To adjust your audio and video settings or to share your screen (which means broadcast what you see on your computer screen to other participants' screens), click on the corresponding icons on the bottom menu. Make sure that your microphone and webcam are enabled when you begin a conference so all participants will be able to hear and see you.
>
> You can be sure that your microphone and webcam are working properly when you see the icons for your microphone and webcam filled in blue, as displayed in the previous screenshot. If these icons have a slash through them, then the corresponding function is turned off and you should click the icon to turn the function on.

Next, look at the menu on the left side, which shows the **Public Chat**, **Shared Notes**, and **Users** list showing all of the participants involved in the conference by name. Also notice the **Manage users** gear icon to the right of the **Users** header, which gives you a variety of useful options when facilitating a conference, as pictured in the following screenshot:

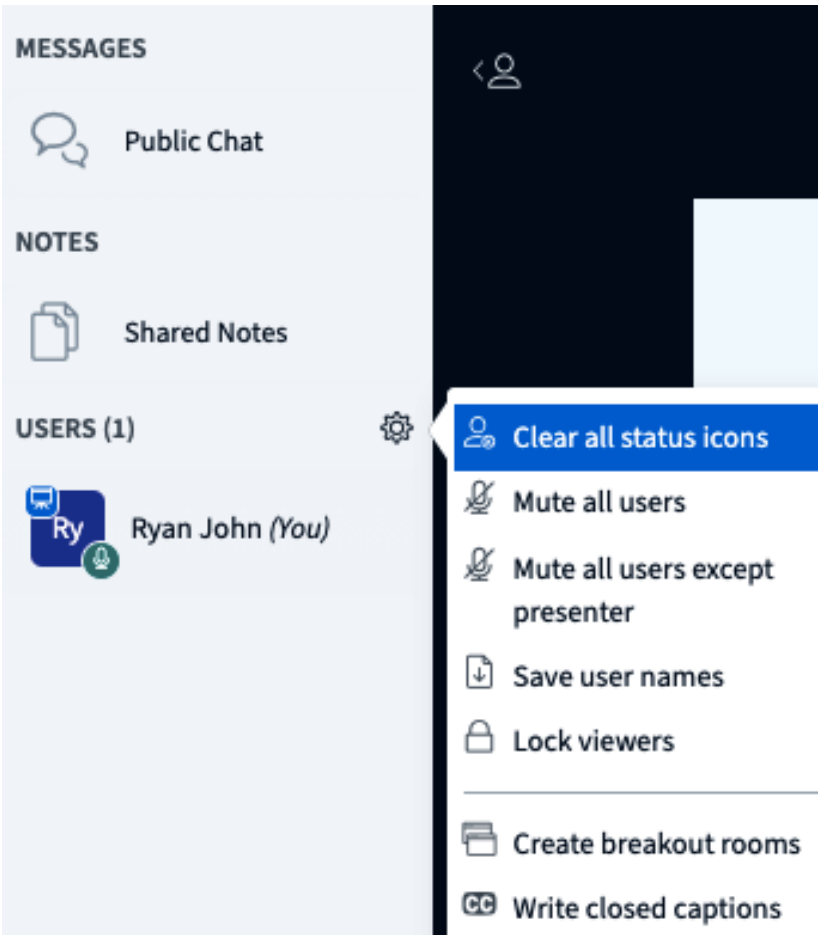


Figure 4.26 – Left menu and Users menu

As the facilitator of the conference, you are able to mute or unmute participants' microphones, which you will find is a useful tool to cut down on extraneous noise and feedback from certain users or users who are speaking out of turn. Participants have the option to set their status to a number of emoji icons representing emotions or feedback.

Keep an eye out for a raised hand status – when a participant uses this status, a small hand icon will replace the icon to their name so the presenter (presumably you to begin with) will see that that they would like to speak. If you need to mute or adjust the status of a user, simply click on their name under the **Users** list and select the desired action from the menu that appears, as shown in the following screenshot:

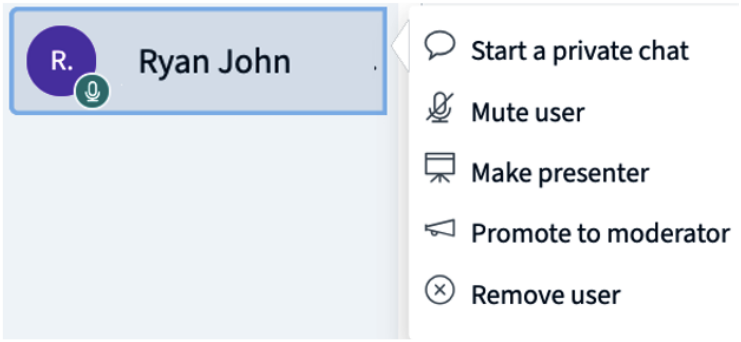


Figure 4.27 – User options menu

In the middle of the left menu is the **Shared Notes** option. This is a feature that allows you or certain participants to contribute to shared notes on the presentation that all participants can see. The **Shared Notes** feature includes common formatting options above the shared note textbox, including the option to export the note to a variety of formats. The **Shared Notes** feature and menu icons are shown in the following screenshot:

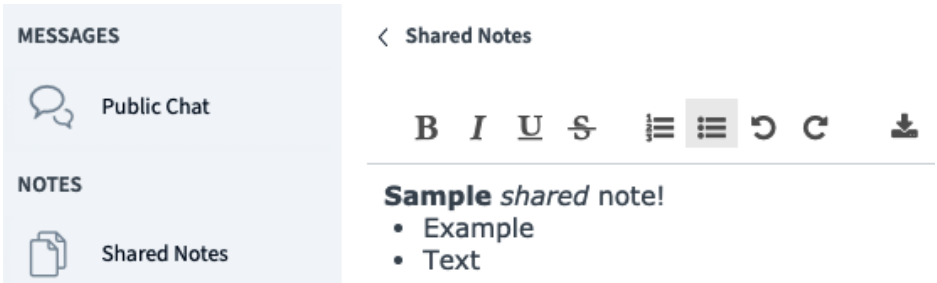


Figure 4.28 – Shared Notes feature and formatting options

At the top of the left menu, you will see the **Public Chat** option. If you click on this option, it will open the chat where you can post messages to the entire group. To write a chat message, complete the following steps:

1. Click on **Public Chat** from the left side menu, which will open the **Public Chat** area of the meeting.

2. Type your message at the bottom of the **Public Chat** area of the screen and click the blue envelope icon or press *Enter* to send the message. Your message will be visible to all participants in the conference.
3. To send a private chat message to an individual participant, click on the participant's name from the **Users** list and then click **Start a private chat** from the menu that appears, as shown in the following screenshot:

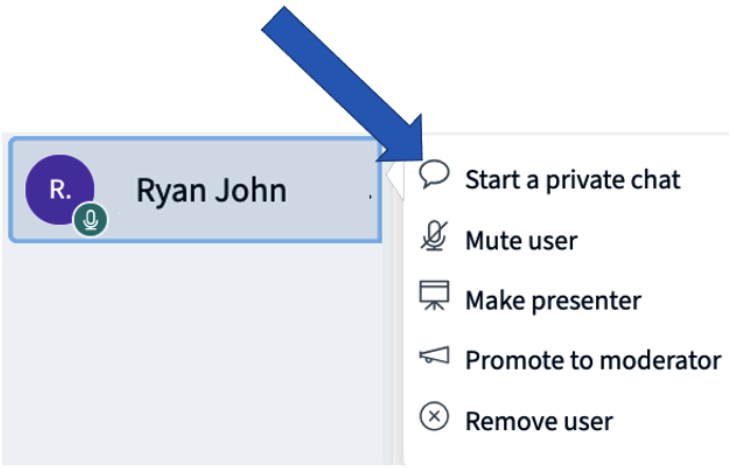


Figure 4.29 – Start a private chat option

4. Once you send a private chat message, only the user you have selected will see the message. The chat will appear on the list of chats on the left side of the screen. The user's name will appear as the name of the private chat underneath **Public Chat**:

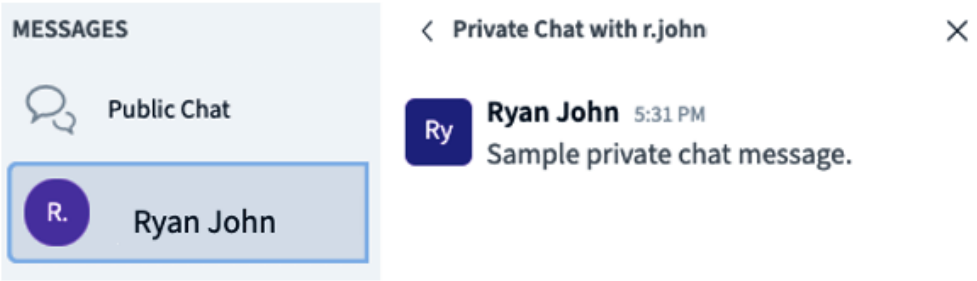


Figure 4.30 – Sample private chat message

When you have completed your conference, you can log out of the conference by clicking the icon with three vertical dots in the top-right corner and selecting **End Meeting**. Note that if you want to allow participants to continue in the conference without you, you can instead choose **Logout**, which will leave the conference open for other participants, but you will be removed from the meeting. The options menu is shown in the following screenshot:

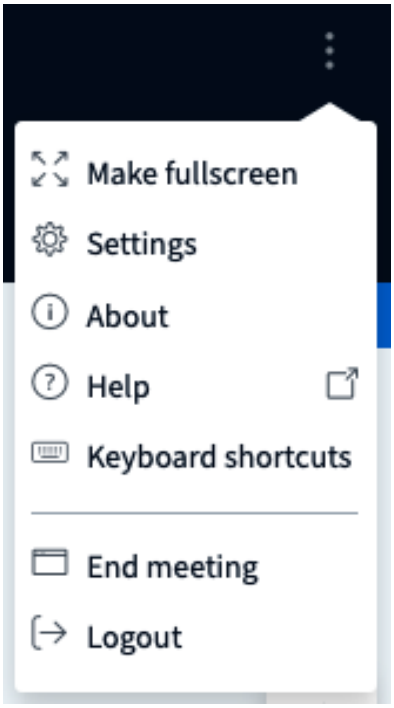


Figure 4.31 – Meeting options menu

When you end a meeting and return to the **Conferences** page on Canvas, the conference will appear under **Completed Conferences** at the bottom of the page.

Summary

In this chapter, we begin by exploring the inbox message feature of Canvas. We covered how to access your messages by clicking the **Inbox** link in the left Global Navigation Menu. We were able to compose and send a message to various users and talked about the various ways to manage conversations including how to mark as unread, star, archive, and delete conversations.

Next, we discussed how to post announcements to your course. We then moved on to viewing assignments and grading using the Gradebook and SpeedGrader. We began by accessing the Gradebook and SpeedGrader and looked at how to view a submission for a specific student, how to assign them a grade, and how to offer feedback.

Finally, we discussed setting up synchronous online meetings using the conferences feature of Canvas by creating a sample Big Blue Button conference. We covered how to join the conference using your audio and then explored the various features within the conferencing service including the **Users** list, the **Shared Notes** section, and the **Chat** options.

At this point in your journey, we have successfully covered the basics of building and teaching your Canvas course. The next chapter will cover some of the extras and special features available to you through Canvas to further enhance your teaching. These options will allow you to bolster your students' understanding and achievement through creating collaborations, designating learning outcomes, developing assessment tools, and tracking activity within your course.

5
Exploring Special Features

Now that we have covered the basic skills required to create, build, design, and teach your Canvas course, let's look into some of the more advanced special features that Canvas has to offer. In this chapter, we will learn how to do the following:

- Create collaborations between students that will allow them to work on documents together online
- Set up learning outcomes
- Create rubrics within Canvas and attach them to activities for assessment
- Enable and view the Learning Mastery Gradebook
- Use the Course Analytics and Course Statistics tools within Canvas to monitor your students' progress, gauge and bolster student engagement, and map interactions between users from course to course.

By the end of this chapter, you will have learned about many of the more advanced features of Canvas and will be ready to integrate them into your course. To utilize Canvas to help with collaborative activities, we will start this chapter by looking at the **Collaborations** feature.

Technical requirements

To complete this chapter, you will need the following:

- A computer with internet access
- A Canvas account (see *Chapter 1*, *Getting Started with Canvas*)
- A Canvas course with course content created (see *Chapter 2*, *Building Your Canvas Course*, and *Chapter 3*, *Getting Ready to Launch Your Course*)

Creating Collaborations

One of the most effective means of fostering student learning and engagement is through group work. Group work empowers students to learn from one another and fosters social connections. The **Collaborations** feature of Canvas allows you to set up ways in which your students can work together to create documents online. Through two integrated outside web tools, collaborations allow you to set up documents that multiple users can access and edit together in real time from different locations or devices.

Some examples of situations in which you might choose to utilize the Collaborations feature of Canvas might be for planning group projects, full class note-taking, brainstorming ideas, signing up for activities, or writing a group paper to save and submit to a group assignment. In addition to teacher-created collaborations, students can use the Collaborations feature to create their own group documents as well by following the same steps described in this section.

Canvas allows you to set up group documents with Google Docs. Let's work our way through setting up a collaboration using Google Docs as an example of how you might give your students the opportunity to work together using their existing Canvas accounts.

> **Note**
>
> Google Docs is the default option for creating collaborations through Canvas. Your institution may have additional or alternative services configured for collaborations, which you would select from the drop-down menu next to **Collaborate Using:** on the Collaborations page. Most of the following steps would be the same for other services, and we will use Google Docs as the default for the purposes of this section. Also note that at this time, other Google features such as Slides or Sheets are not supported for Collaborations.

To create a collaboration, complete these steps:

1. Click on the **Collaborations** tab of the left Course Navigation menu.
2. Canvas offers a nice explanation of collaborations and how to use them on the **Collaborations** page, so take a moment to read the text on the main Collaborations page.
3. As noted on the **Collaborations** page, collaborators will need a Google account to participate in a collaboration using Google Docs. As such, you will need to provide authorization for Canvas to access your Google Drive. To do so, click the **Authorize Google Docs Access** button at the bottom of the page, as shown in the following screenshot:

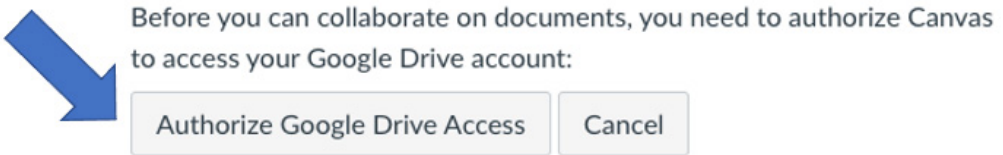


Figure 5.1 – Authorizing access to your Google Drive

4. Follow the onscreen instructions to log in to your Google account and provide access for the Canvas Collaborations feature. Click **Allow** to proceed, as shown in the following screenshot:

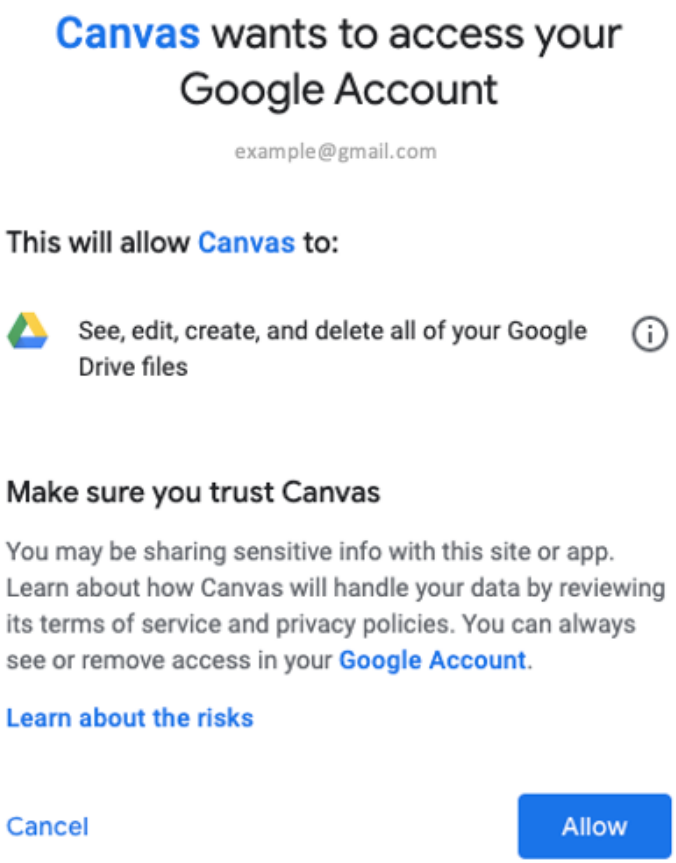


Figure 5.2 – Allow Canvas to access your Google Drive

5. Once you have clicked **Allow**, you will be taken back to the **Collaborations** page. At the bottom of the page, you will now see an area to enter the document name and description that you want students to see when they join the collaboration. You can enter the name and description for the collaborative document you want to create, as seen in the following screenshot:



Figure 5.3 – Document Name and Description spaces

6. Below the description, you will see the option to select participants to **Collaborate With**. You can select individual **People** to include, or you can select entire user **Groups** (which you would have previously set up from within the **People** tab on the left Course Navigation menu as discussed in *Chapter 3*, *Getting Ready to Launch Your Course*).

7. To select individual **People**, click on their names from the list of participants on the left side. Their names will then appear on the right side, and you can remove them by clicking the **X** that appears when you hover over their name. In the following screenshot, you see **Student, Test** in the list of participants on the left-hand side and **John, Ryan** in the collaboration list on the right-hand side:

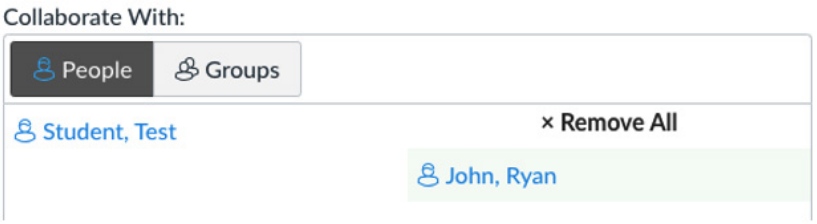


Figure 5.4 – Participants in the collaboration appear on the right once added

8. To select specific groups, click on the **Groups** button above the participant list. You will see the list of groups that you previously created from within the **People** tab on the left Course Navigation menu, and you can select groups of people to include in the collaboration as pictured in the following screenshot:

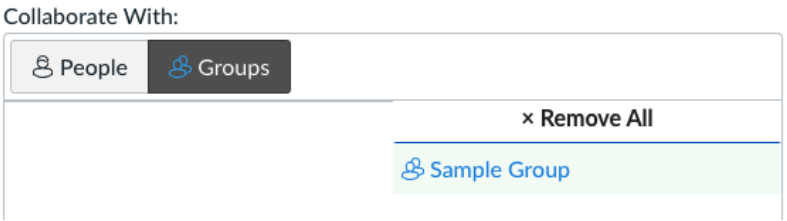


Figure 5.5 – Adding participants to collaborations in Groups

9. When you have finished selecting participants or groups to include in the collaboration, click on the **Start Collaborating** button at the bottom of the screen, as shown in the following screenshot:

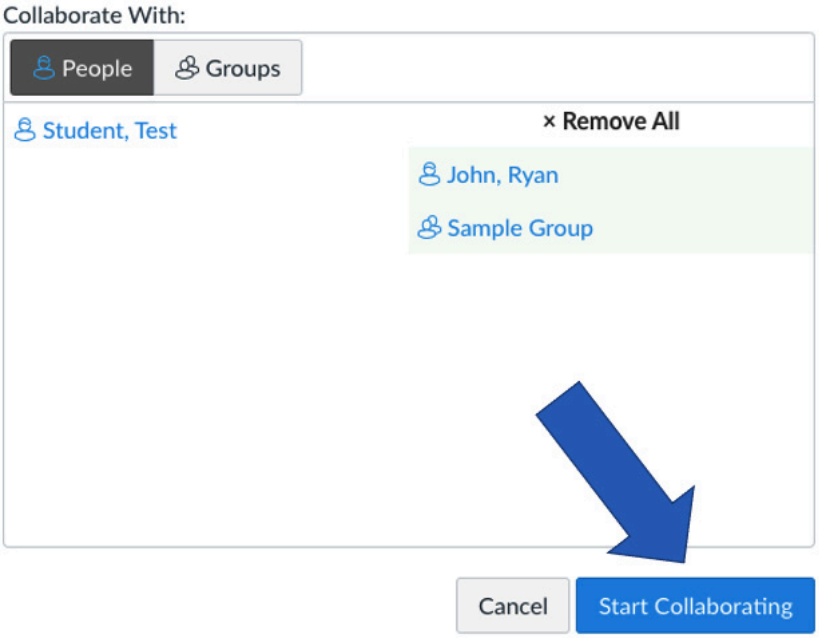


Figure 5.6 – Start Collaborating button

10. After that, the collaboration will be created, and the Google Doc will open in a new tab or window of your internet browser. Close the **Google Doc** tab and return to Canvas.
11. Your students will receive an invitation to join the collaboration you have created for them. Canvas collaborative Google Docs can be accessed at any time by clicking on the **Collaborations** tab on the left Course Navigation menu. The collaborative Google Docs can also be accessed directly within the main folder of your Google Drive.
12. Once you have created a collaboration, you can create additional collaborations by going to the **Collaborations** page and clicking the **+ Start a new collaboration** button at the top of the page, as shown in the following screenshot:

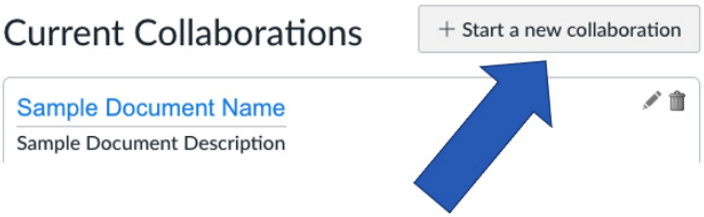


Figure 5.7 – Start a new collaboration button

Encourage your students to take advantage of the opportunity to work together using collaborations. Google Docs function in much the same way as a basic word processing document.

Editing or deleting collaborations

If you are the creator of a collaboration and you would like to edit or delete the collaboration, complete the following steps:

1. Open the **Collaboration** page from the left Course Navigation menu.
2. On the list of collaborations, find the collaboration you would like to edit or delete. To the right of the collaboration name, you will see the edit icon, which looks like a pencil, and the delete icon, which looks like a trashcan. To edit the collaboration, click on the edit icon, as shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 5.8 – Editing a collaboration

3. Within the **Collaborations** page, you will see the name and description of the collaboration turn into textboxes where you can make your changes. You will also see the participant list appear, which you can adjust in the same way you did to create the collaboration. When you are finished editing the collaboration, click on **Update collaboration** to save your changes.
4. To delete a collaboration, click on the delete icon next to the edit icon. Since the collaboration was created as a Google Doc, you will see a pop-up window with options to **Just Delete from Canvas** or **Also Delete from Google Docs**. If you only delete the collaboration from Canvas, the document could still be accessed through Google Drive. Click the desired option, and your collaboration will be deleted.

Providing opportunities for your students to work together and combine your ideas is a way of making the content they are engaging with more meaningful and personal. As content gains meaning for your students, that meaning will hopefully begin to impact their achievement positively. In order to assess student achievement, it is helpful for you to articulate your goals for students as they work through the content of your course; one such way to do so within Canvas is to use the Outcomes feature.

Setting up Outcomes

As general educational trends have moved toward more standardized and concrete methods of assessment in recent years, Canvas has incorporated the **Outcomes** feature to help you design assessment tools to keep up with the demands of teaching in the 21st century. The **Outcomes** feature of Canvas allows you to easily create, manage, and utilize assessment outcomes. Outcomes represent the skills, traits, or information you would like your students to come away with after your course. Standardized outcomes are becoming increasingly popular in North American schools and in institutions across the globe. Many discipline-specific associations have created national standards that are comparable to the types of outcomes you would utilize in a Canvas course.

Outcomes are an excellent means of mapping your curriculum by providing you with a documentation of your learning goals. Should you choose to use your outcomes to create rubrics for assessment, you will also have documentation of the ways in which your assessments directly relate to the concepts you set out to teach. The **Outcomes** feature could be used to align with standards-based grading systems and approaches that are also becoming increasingly popular.

Once you have designed and created your outcomes, you will be able to quickly and easily access your outcomes when creating rubrics for assessments within your course. You can create outcomes that align to customized standards, benchmarks, and goals, or you can choose from common state and national standards that are already available through the **Outcomes** feature, such as the **Common Core Standards**. Once you have set up your outcomes, you can use them to easily create a rubric for assignments, discussions, or quizzes within your course.

You can also enable the Learning Mastery Gradebook, which we will discuss later in this chapter, to track student progress on outcomes. The outcomes you create for one course are also accessible and usable within other courses, so the hard work you put into creating outcomes for one course will come in handy if you would like to use them for another course you are teaching.

Creating outcomes

To create a new outcome, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **Outcomes** link on the left Course Navigation menu. You will see the **Outcomes** page, with a menu across the top, a list of outcomes on the left side (which will appear empty until you begin to add outcomes), and instructions on the right, as shown in the following screenshot:

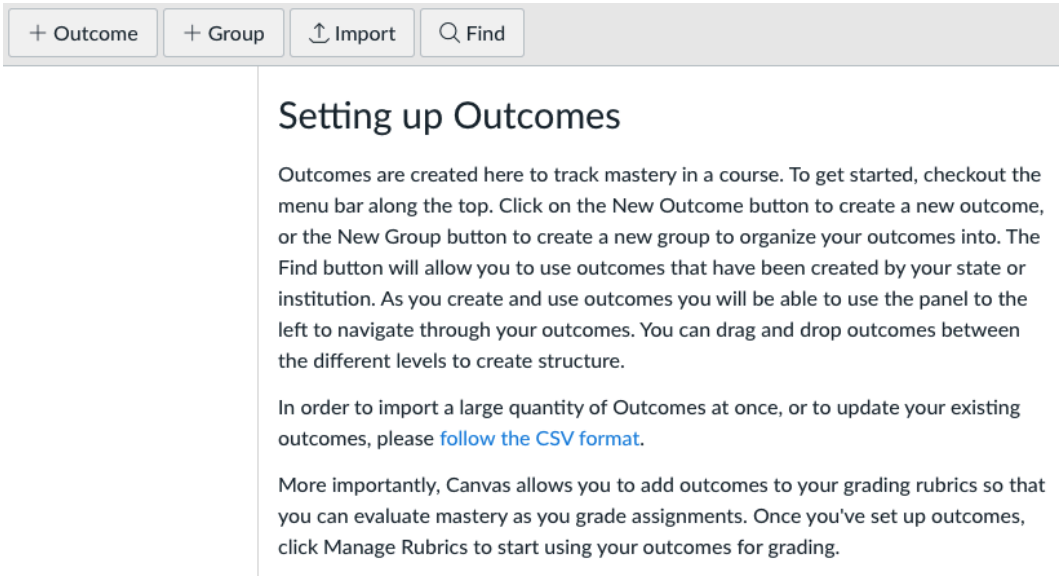


Figure 5.9 – Outcomes page layout

2. Take a look at the instructions, which offer an excellent overview of how you might choose to use outcomes within your course. Click on the **+ Outcome** button in the top-left corner of the menu. You will see a new Outcome template appear where the instructions were on the page.

3. Insert the desired name of your outcome into the **Name this outcome** box at the top. This name might include numbers or letters that are commonly assigned to organize standards or objectives, so the next option of adding a **Friendly name** could help you or your students to understand the outcome more easily. You can choose a friendly name or skip that option, and then input the main body of your outcome in the **Describe this outcome** Rich Content Editor box. An example of a new outcome might be as follows:

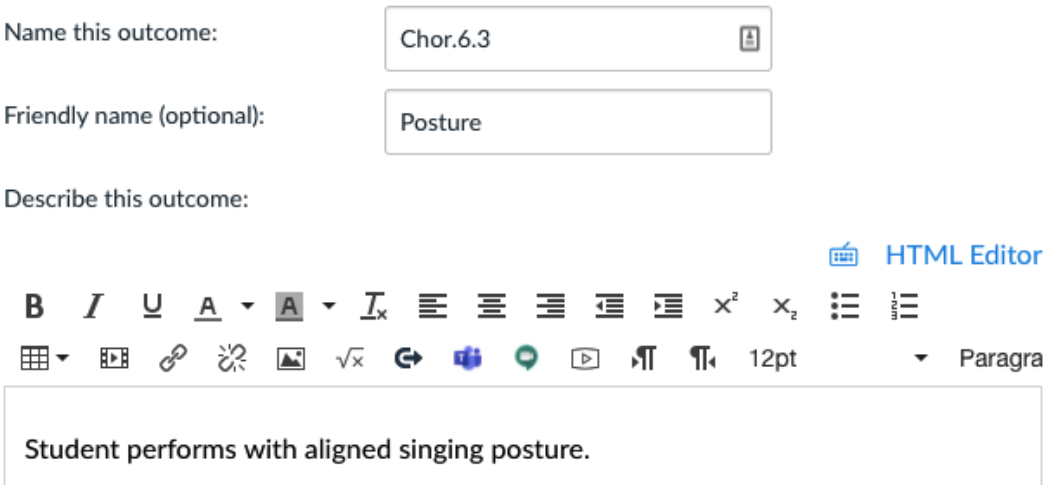


Figure 5.10 – Example outcome

4. Once you are satisfied with the name and description of your outcome, look below the description to **Criterion ratings**. This section allows you to adjust how you wish to score your students' attainment of the outcome. The default criteria are shown in the following screenshot:

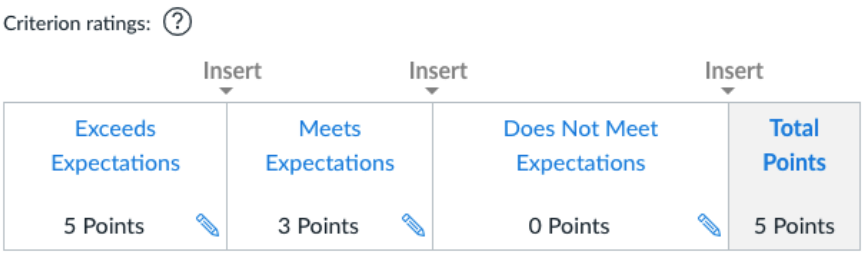


Figure 5.11 – Default Criterion ratings

5. To edit **Criterion Ratings**, click on the edit icon that looks like a pencil at the bottom-right corner of each rating box next to the point value.

6. Once you click the edit icon, you will see the name of the criterion and the point value displayed in textboxes. You can then rename or modify the title of the criterion and adjust the point value. If you would like to, you can enter a longer description of what the student needs to do in order to achieve the criterion you are describing, rather than offering only a title for the criterion. This can clarify the expectations for students and can help them better understand how to meet each criterion. This idea will also be discussed further in the following sections regarding rubrics.
7. Click on the **OK** button at the bottom of the criterion box to save your criterion. You also have the option to delete the criterion by clicking on the **Delete** button at the bottom, as pictured in the following screenshot:

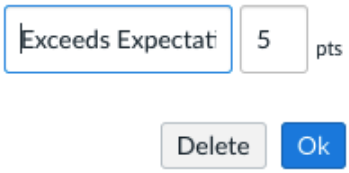


Figure 5.12 – Saving or deleting a criterion

8. If you would like to add more than three criteria for your outcome, click on the **Insert** arrow above the lines separating the existing criteria, as pictured in the following screenshot. This will create a new criterion that you can edit and save in the same way as the other criteria:

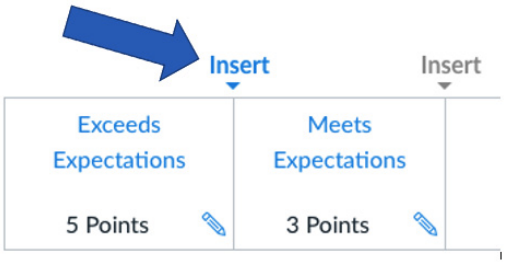


Figure 5.13 – Inserting additional criteria

9. Underneath **Criterion ratings**, you can set the threshold for students to achieve **Mastery at** as a certain minimum point value for the desired outcome. The default for achieving mastery is three points, so you can adjust accordingly should you wish for the mastery threshold to be a higher or lower point average.

10. The final option for learning outcomes is the **Calculation Method** drop-down, which allows you to choose various methods of calculating students' mastery of the outcome. Each option includes a description below once you select it from the drop-down menu. The options include **Decaying Average**, **n Number of Times**, **Most Recent Score**, and **Highest Score**. The following screenshot shows the calculation method of **Decaying Average**, along with a description of this option:

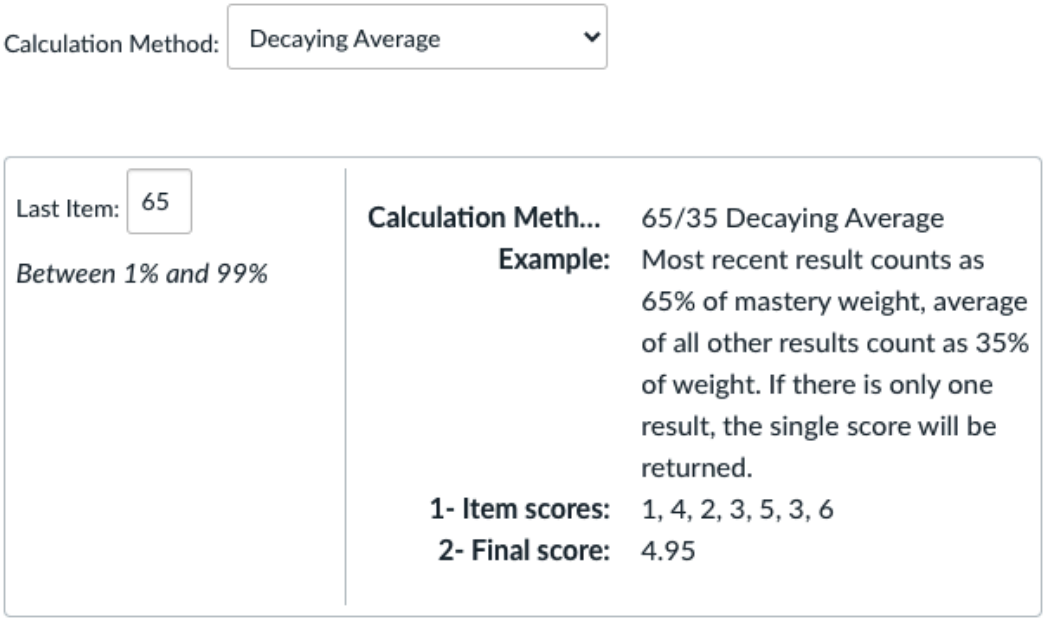


Figure 5.14 – Decaying Average calculation method

11. When you have finished creating your outcome, click on **Save** in the bottom-right corner of the page. You will see your outcome appear on the right side of the screen where the instructions first appeared, and you will also see the **Move**, **Edit**, and **Delete** buttons show up underneath your new outcome. You are always able to move, edit, or delete an outcome by selecting it from the list of outcomes on the left and clicking on the desired action underneath the outcome.

Now that we have created an outcome, let's take a look at how to organize your outcomes into Outcome Groups.

Creating Outcome Groups

Once you have finished creating your first outcome, you might decide to create an **Outcome Group** to organize your outcomes. Examples of group labels might be by subject matter, grade level, or unit of study.

To create an Outcome Group, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **+ Group** button next to the **+ Outcome** button on the top menu of the **Outcomes** page.
2. You will see a new outcome group template appear in the center of the screen with a box, **Name this group:**, and a Rich Content Editor textbox to describe the group. This screen is very similar to the new outcome template, but you will be describing the grouping of outcomes rather than the specific individual outcomes. The new group template is shown in the following screenshot:

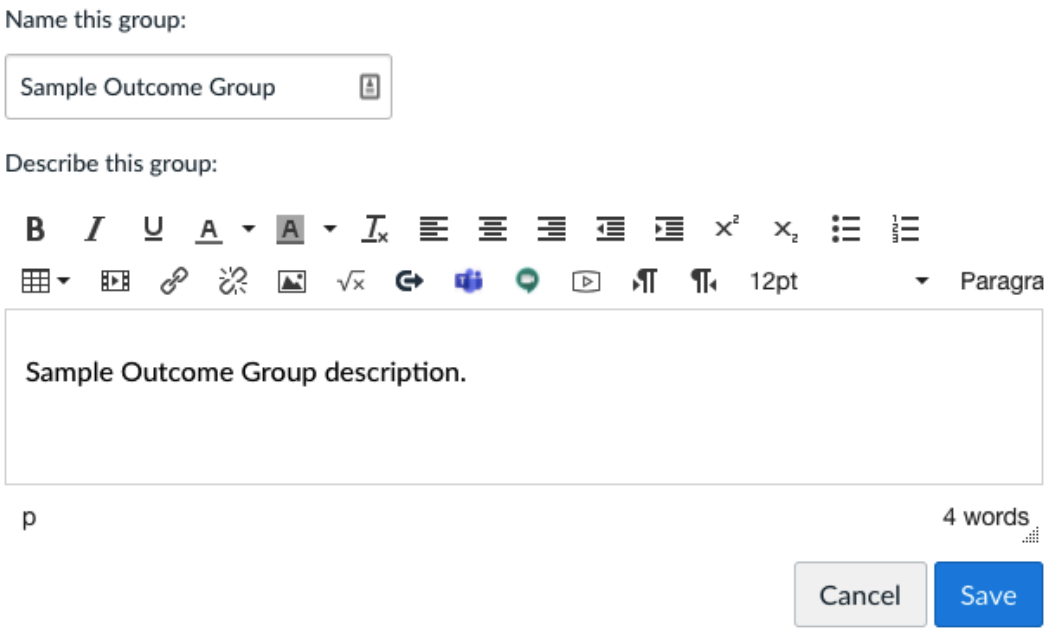


Figure 5.15 – New outcome group template

3. Click on **Save** in the bottom-right corner of the template. You will notice that your outcome group now appears to the left as a folder on the list of outcomes.

Now that you have created an outcome and an outcome group, you can add outcomes to your outcome groups:

1. To add an existing outcome to a newly created outcome group, click and drag the existing outcome over the name of the desired outcome group. You will see a new column appear to the right of the list of outcomes that shows the outcome you moved nested within the outcome group.
2. To move the outcome back, simply click and drag the outcome back over to the main list of outcomes.
3. To add a new outcome to an outcome group, click on the outcome group from the list of outcomes. When the outcome group is selected, click the **+ Outcome** button at the top and input the information for the new outcome as usual.
4. When you click on **Save**, the outcome will appear within the outcome group you selected. The following screenshot shows a new outcome entitled **Chor.6.4** that was added to **Sample Outcome Group**:

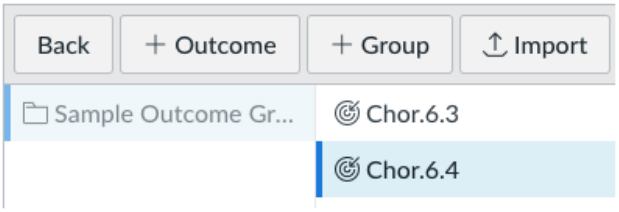


Figure 5.16 – New outcome in Sample Outcome Group

Now that we have learned how to create and organize outcomes within Canvas, we will explore how to import existing standards from `.csv` or `.json` files that you have created or that have been provided by your institution.

Importing existing outcomes

If you would like to import outcomes from a `.csv` or `.json` file that you have created or that has been provided by your institution, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Import** button next to the **+ Group** button on the top menu of the **Outcomes** page.
2. Locate the `.csv` or `.json` file on your computer, and then drag and drop the file onto the screen in Canvas.

3. If you are creating a `.csv` file and are unsure of how to format your outcomes, you can click on **Outcomes CSV Format** at the bottom of the screen for detailed instructions from Canvas:



Figure 5.17 – Uploading the outcomes option and the Outcomes CSV Format link

4. Once you have imported your `.csv` or `.json` file, your outcomes will appear on the outcome list, and you will be able to modify, organize, or delete them in the same way you can with outcomes you have created directly in Canvas.

Next, let's discuss how to find existing outcomes to utilize in your courses.

Finding existing outcomes to use

As many institutions across North America and beyond have begun adopting national and state standards, Canvas has integrated the **Common Core Standards** for English and Mathematics within the **Outcomes** feature for you to quickly and easily import into your Canvas course. The **Common Core Standards**, which have been adopted by a large majority of the states in the United States, aim to make clear the outcomes desired for students at various grade levels.

If your institution uses specific national, state, or institutional standards and you are using an institutional Canvas account, the standards that your institution uses may also be available to import to your course through the following steps.

To access and import existing standards such as the **Common Core Standards** for use within your courses, complete the following steps:

1. Open the **Outcomes** page from the left Course Navigation menu.
2. Click on the **Find** button on the top menu of the **Outcomes** page.
3. In the pop-up window that appears, you will see an outcome group called **Common Core State Standards** listed on the left-hand side. If you click on this group, the **English Language Arts/Literacy** and **Mathematics** outcome groups will appear in the column to the right, as displayed in the following screenshot:

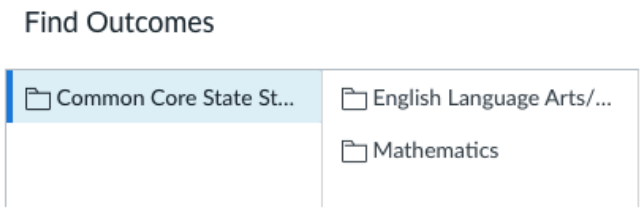


Figure 5.18 – Common Core outcome groups

4. Notice that once you click on the **Common Core State Standards** outcome group, the **Import** button appears in the bottom-right corner of the window. You have the option to import everything within that group, or you can click through to more specific outcome groups, such as specific grade levels of **English Language Arts/Literacy** or **Mathematics**.
5. If you are an English or Mathematics teacher, it will be the most helpful for you to click through those outcome groups and find the specific standards for your grade level. For example, if you are a fifth grade math teacher, the selection in the following screenshot will allow you to import all of the common core state standards for fifth grade mathematics:

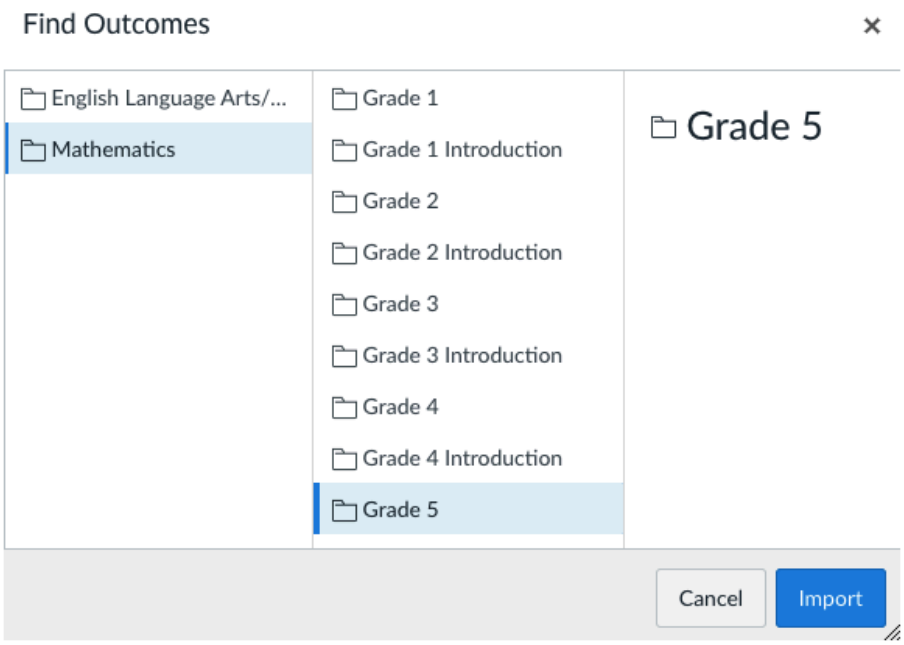


Figure 5.19 – Common Core Grade 5 outcomes selection

6. When you have selected the outcome group or specific outcome you would like to utilize in your Canvas course, click on the **Import** button and the selected items will appear in your **Outcomes** page.
7. Once the outcome groups appear on your **Outcomes** page, you can edit, organize, or delete the outcome groups the same way you would for an outcome group you manually created. It is important to note that you cannot edit the actual Common Core outcomes, as they are standardized in their wording and intent.

With all of our outcomes and outcome groups now created or imported, we will move on to creating rubrics for the assignments within your Canvas course. We will also cover how to utilize the outcomes you've just created to easily create a rubric as well.

Creating rubrics

Rubrics are an extremely helpful assessment tool that serve to clarify expectations for students before an activity and to provide clear, consistent feedback for students once an activity is completed. The **Rubrics** feature of Canvas makes it easy to create a customized rubric with your own criteria or to utilize the outcomes you've already created to quickly set up a new rubric. The rubrics you can create utilizing outcomes display the outcome followed by a grid containing the criterion ratings you created to rate students' performances. Using a rubric to assess a student's work, you will select the criterion rating that best describes the work they completed to meet the desired outcome. Based on the criterion ratings you choose and the point values associated with these ratings, Canvas determines the student's score based on the point value attained for each outcome.

With that understanding, let's look at how to create rubrics for Canvas assignments using the following steps:

1. Click on the **Rubrics** page from the left Course Navigation menu.
2. You will be taken to the **Course Rubrics** page. If you have not created any rubrics, this page will appear blank. In the top-right corner of this page, click on the **+ Add Rubric** button.
3. A new blank rubric template will appear on the **Course Rubrics** page, as shown in the following screenshot:

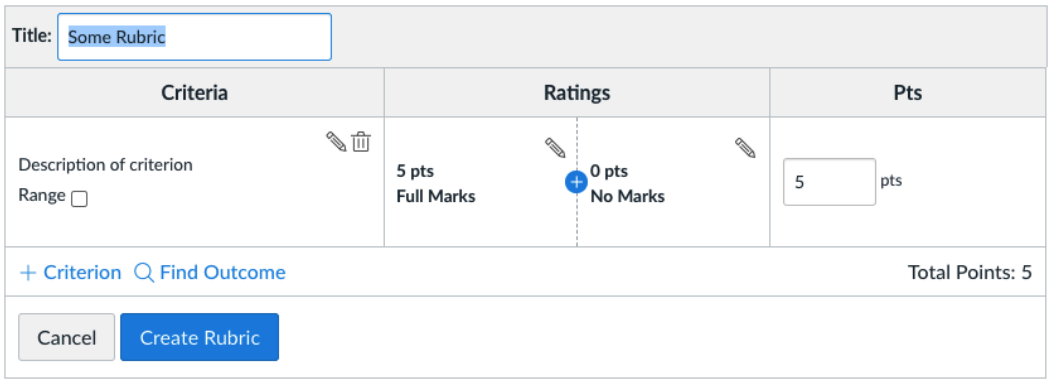


Figure 5.20 – The Rubric template

4. The phrase **Some Rubric** will appear as the default title of your rubric—to change the title of your rubric, click on the textbox where **Some Rubric** appears and type in the desired title.

5. To edit the description of the blank criterion, click on the pencil-shaped edit icon that appears in the top-right corner of the criterion box. A pop-up window will open where you can edit the description of the criterion and add a longer description if desired.

> **Note**
>
> Note that creating a new criterion for a rubric is not the same as creating a new outcome, so any new criteria you create through this process will only be useable within the rubric for which they were created.

6. There are two ratings in the default template, **Full Marks** with 5 points, and **No Marks** with 0 points. To edit the name or point value of these ratings, click on the pencil-shaped edit icon that appears in the top-right corner of the rating box you wish to edit.
7. To add a new rating, click on the blue plus sign icon between the two default ratings. As shown in the following screenshot, a pop-up window will open that allows you to adjust the **Rating Score** of the new rating (the default is 3 points), set your **Rating Title**, and add a **Rating Description**:

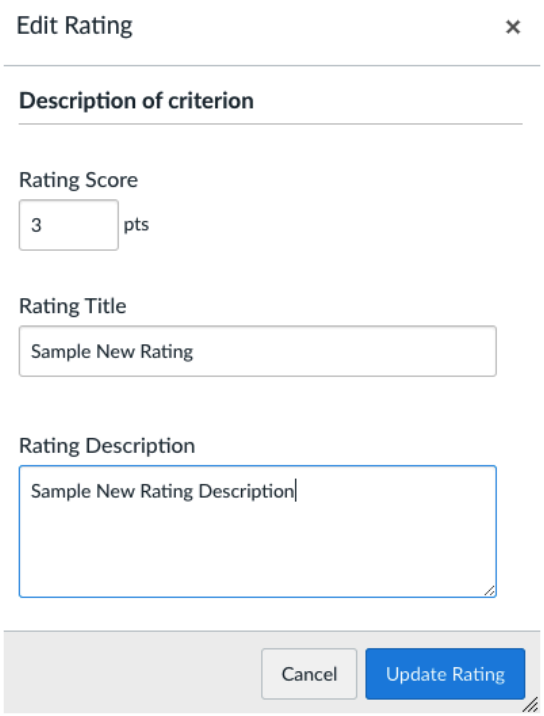


Figure 5.21 – New rating options

8. You can add more ratings in the same fashion by clicking on the blue plus sign icons between ratings, as shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 5.22 – Adding new ratings

9. To add a new criterion to your rubric, click on the **+ Criterion** button underneath the description of the first criterion. You will see a new criterion row appear in the rubric graph that you can edit and customize following the same steps just discussed.

Now that we have covered how to manually create a rubric with custom criteria and ratings, let's discuss how to add outcomes you have already created to your rubric:

1. To include one of the outcomes you've created within a rubric, click on the **Find Outcome** link next to the **+ Criterion** link at the bottom of your rubric. This will open a pop-up window that displays the outcome groups and outcomes you have already created or imported.
2. Locate the outcome you would like to use within your rubric by clicking through the outcome groups.
3. Click on the desired outcome, and then click **Import** in the bottom-right corner of the pop-up window. Once you click on **Import**, the pop-up window will close and the selected outcome will appear within your rubric.
4. When you have adjusted all of the content within your rubric to your liking, click on the **Create Rubric** button in the bottom-left corner of the template. In the following screenshot, you will see a sample of the new template rubric completed with a title, a manually created criterion including an additional rating, and an imported outcome criterion:

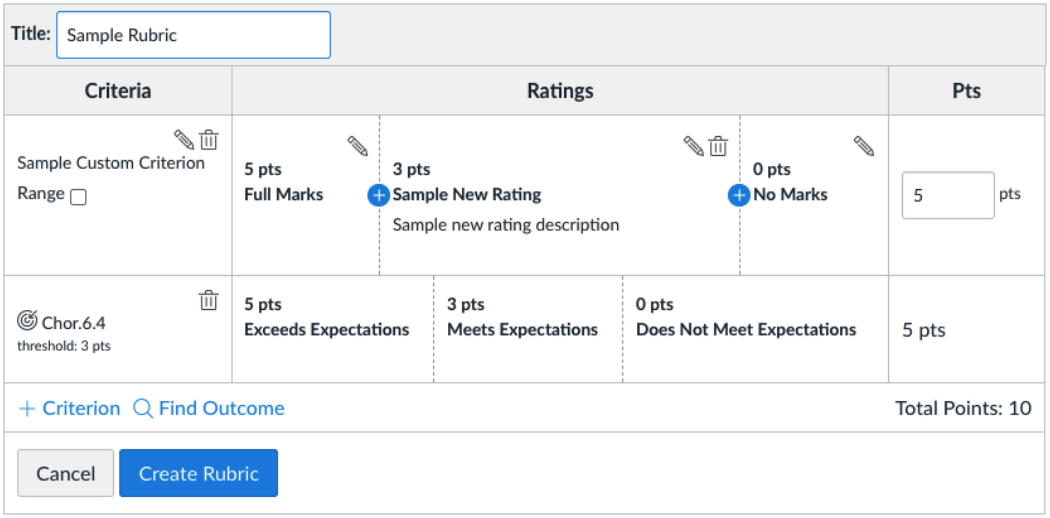


Figure 5.23 – Sample rubric

> **Note**
>
> Note that if you import an outcome into a rubric and then edit that outcome within the rubric, the outcome will remain unchanged in the outcome bank on the **Outcomes** page. When you import an outcome into a rubric, you are creating a copy of the outcome for use within the rubric rather than linking directly to the outcome.

Next, let's learn how to add a rubric to an assignment to streamline grading and enhance the feedback you provide to students.

Adding rubrics to assignments

With your first rubric now created, you can add this rubric to **Assignment** or **Discussion** as an assessment tool. To add a rubric to an assignment and use it for grading, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Assignments** link on the left Course Navigation menu. From the list of assignments, click on the assignment to which you would like to add your rubric.

2. The selected assignment page will open, and at the bottom of the page, you will see a **+ Rubric** button below the due date information for the assignment, as shown in the bottom-left corner of the following screenshot:

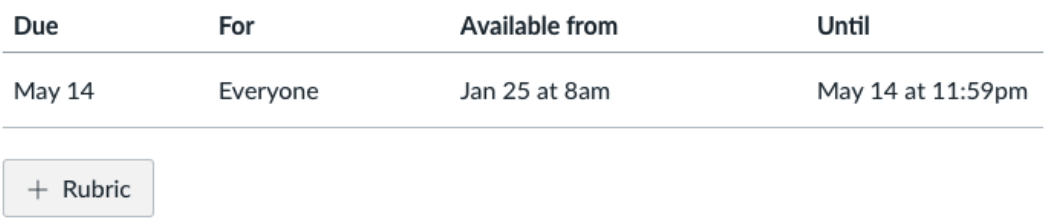


Figure 5.24 – Add a rubric button

3. You will see a new rubric template appear below the assignment that includes the **Find a Rubric** option in the top-right corner. You have the option to create a new rubric directly from this template, which will appear on the **Course Rubrics** page once you save it. However, if you wish to utilize the rubric you created previously, click on **Find a Rubric** to select the rubric from the list of course rubrics. A pop-up window will appear that will allow you to locate rubrics you have created within the course.
4. Once you find the rubric you would like to use for the assignment, select the rubric from the list and then click on the **Use This Rubric** button underneath the rubric, as pictured in the bottom-left corner of the following screenshot:

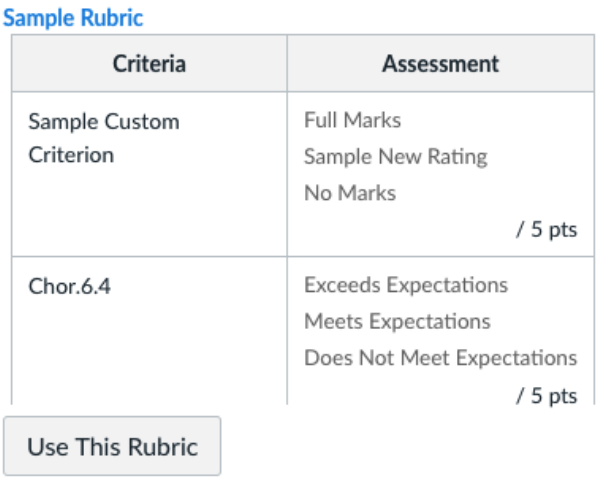


Figure 5.25 – Use This Rubric button

5. The pop-up window will close, and you will see the rubric appear under the assignment description. If you would like to edit the rubric or adjust the settings for the rubric within the assignment, click on the pencil-shaped edit icon in the top-right corner of the rubric. Note that any changes you make to the rubric within the assignment will not adjust the rubric as it appears in the **Course Rubrics** list.
6. When you choose to edit the rubric from within an assignment, you have the option to edit the rubric for that assignment. In addition to the basic edit features, several checkbox options appear below the rubric. Based on how you would like to use the rubric within your course and for the chosen assignment, you may decide to check any of these options to enable you to leave more specific feedback when assessing your students or simplify grading with points. Click on **Update Rubric** when you have selected the desired options. The options and the **Update Rubric** button are shown in the following screenshot:

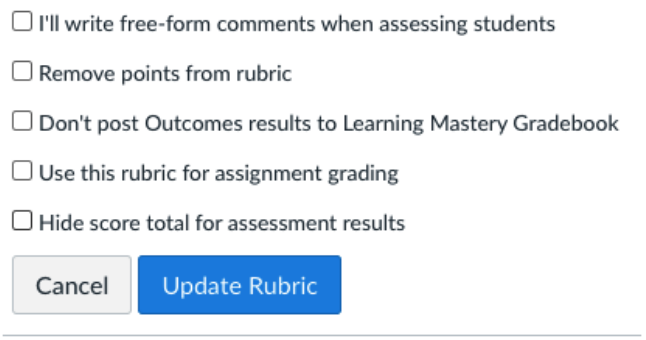


Figure 5.26 – In-assignment rubric options and the Update Rubric button

> **Note**
> If you check the **Use this rubric for assignment grading** option, the rubric will appear in **SpeedGrader** when you grade the assignment. A common goal of creating a rubric is to streamline the grading process, so make sure that you check this box if you wish to use the rubric for grading purposes.

Now that we have added a rubric to an assignment, let's review how to use a rubric for grading.

Using rubrics for grading

Once you have added a rubric to an assignment, you can use the rubric for grading purposes. To do so, complete the following steps:

1. On the assignment page where you have added a rubric, scroll up to the top of the page and click on the **SpeedGrader** link on the right Sidebar menu. This will open **SpeedGrader** and you will be able to see a student's submissions for the selected assignment.
2. On the right-hand side of **SpeedGrader**, you will now see an option that says **View Rubric** in the **Assessment** section at the top, as shown in the following screenshot:

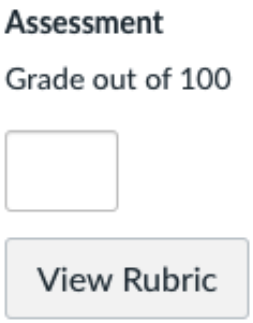


Figure 5.27 – View Rubric button in SpeedGrader

3. Click on this button and the rubric will appear in the **Assessment** section, meaning you can offer the student feedback on their submission using the rubric.

> **Note**
> You can resize the right side of the **SpeedGrader** page to better view your rubric while grading. To do so, click and drag the vertical bar that separates the **Assessment** section from the student's submission to the left.

4. When you are finished grading with the rubric, click on the **Save** button at the bottom. You will see that the completed rubric now appears on the right-hand side of **SpeedGrader** below the **Assessment** section. The student will be able to see this completed rubric as assignment feedback and gauge how they did on the assignment based on the criteria and ratings.
5. When you have finished grading the assignment completely, you can click through to other submissions using the arrows next to the student's name at the top as usual.

Outcomes and rubrics offer you a wide range of opportunities to clarify and standardize expectations while personalizing and specifying feedback for each student in your course. As a learning tool, outcomes and rubrics can push your students to think differently about how to complete assignments for your course and improve students' overall performance.

Now that we have learned how to add outcomes to rubrics and assignments, let's explore another powerful tool connected to the **Outcomes** feature of Canvas, the Learning Mastery Gradebook.

Using the Learning Mastery Gradebook

The **Learning Mastery Gradebook** is a feature you can enable in your Canvas course that shows you a clear overview of student progress for each outcome you have added to your course. This is an outstanding tool for teachers using a standards-based grading approach, and there is a Student Learning Mastery Gradebook feature you can also enable so students can view their progress on each standard as well.

> **Note**
>
> The following section demonstrates the functionality of the Learning Mastery Gradebook available in a Free for Teachers Canvas account. If you are using an Institutional Canvas account, your institution may or may not have this feature enabled. If this feature is not visible in your account, you can contact your administrators or IT department to discuss enabling the feature for use in your course.

To enable the Learning Mastery Gradebook, complete the following steps.

1. Click on the **Settings** page of the left Course Navigation menu.
2. Across the top of the **Settings** page, you will see several tabs with various options. Click on the **Feature Options** tab, which will be the tab furthest on the right.
3. You will see a page listing a variety of advanced features and options that you can enable or disable. To see a description of any option, click the arrow next to the feature name.

4. Find the **Learning Mastery Gradebook** option on the list. To the right of this feature's name, you will see either a red **X** icon, indicating that the feature is disabled or a green checkmark icon indicating that the feature is enabled. To enable the Learning Mastery Gradebook, click on the icon you see on the right and select **Enable** from the drop-down menu that appears. The following screenshot shows the **Learning Mastery Gradebook** feature description as well as the checkmark icon to the right, indicating that the feature is enabled:

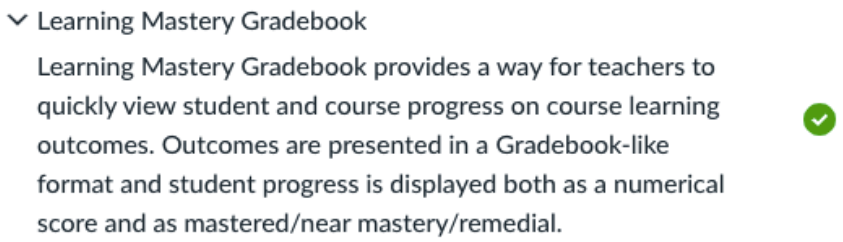


Figure 5.28 – Learning Mastery Gradebook enabled

5. Only you will be able to see the progress markers in the Learning Mastery Gradebook once the feature is enabled. If you would like to enable the same feature for students to see their own progress on outcomes, scroll down on the same page to the **Student Learning Mastery Gradebook** feature. To enable this feature, click on the icon to the right and select **Enable** from the drop-down that appears. The following screenshot shows the **Student Learning Mastery Gradebook** feature description as well as the checkmark icon to the right, indicating that the feature is enabled:

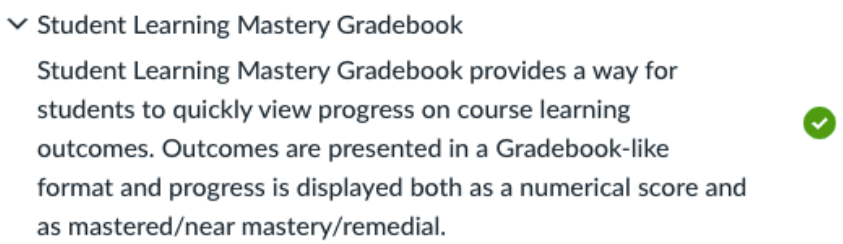


Figure 5.29 – Student Learning Mastery Gradebook enabled

With the **Learning Mastery Gradebook** and **Student Learning Mastery Gradebook** features now enabled, we'll next learn how to view and access these features. To view the **Learning Mastery Gradebook** feature, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Grades** page on the left Course Navigation menu. You will see the traditional Gradebook appear as discussed in *Chapter 4*, *Teaching Your Canvas Course*.
2. To view the Learning Mastery Gradebook, click on the **Gradebook** tab in the top-left corner of the screen above the list of assignments. Next, select **Learning Mastery…** from the drop-down that appears, as shown in the following screenshot:

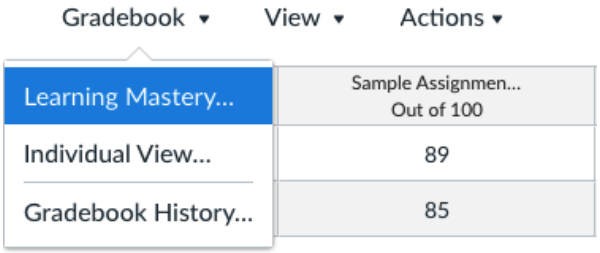


Figure 5.30 – Displaying the Learning Mastery Gradebook

3. The Learning Mastery Gradebook will open. You will see a Gradebook-style table with each student's name in the left column and each outcome that has been added to your course along the top row. The center of the table will indicate each student's progress on each outcome you have added. Outcomes that have been assessed will appear with an average score and color-coded box indicating the student's progress on that outcome. Outcomes that have not yet been assessed will appear blank. The following screenshot shows an example of the Learning Mastery Gradebook:

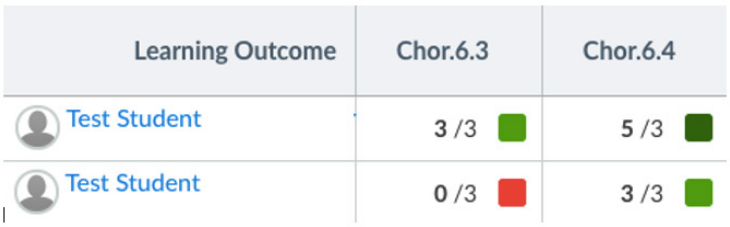


Figure 5.31 – Sample Learning Mastery Gradebook

4. On the right-hand side of the **Learning Mastery Gradebook** page, you will see a key for the color-coded boxes that appear to indicate each student's progress. You will also see options to **Hide outcomes with no results**, to **Hide students with no results**, or to **Export report** from the Learning Mastery Gradebook, as shown in the following screenshot:

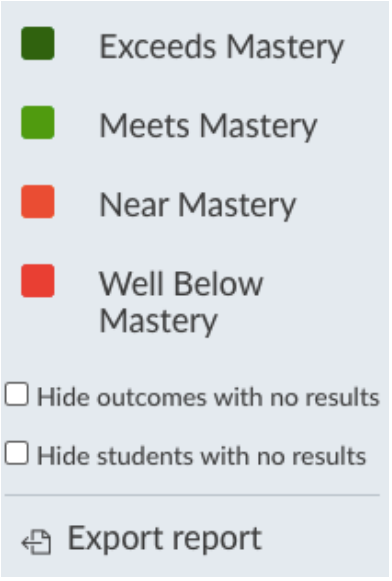


Figure 5.32 – Progress key and options for the Learning Mastery Gradebook

5. If you hover your cursor over any outcome listed across the top of the Learning Mastery Gradebook, you will see a pie chart indicating all students' progress on the outcome and details of how the outcome is calculated, as displayed in the following screenshot:

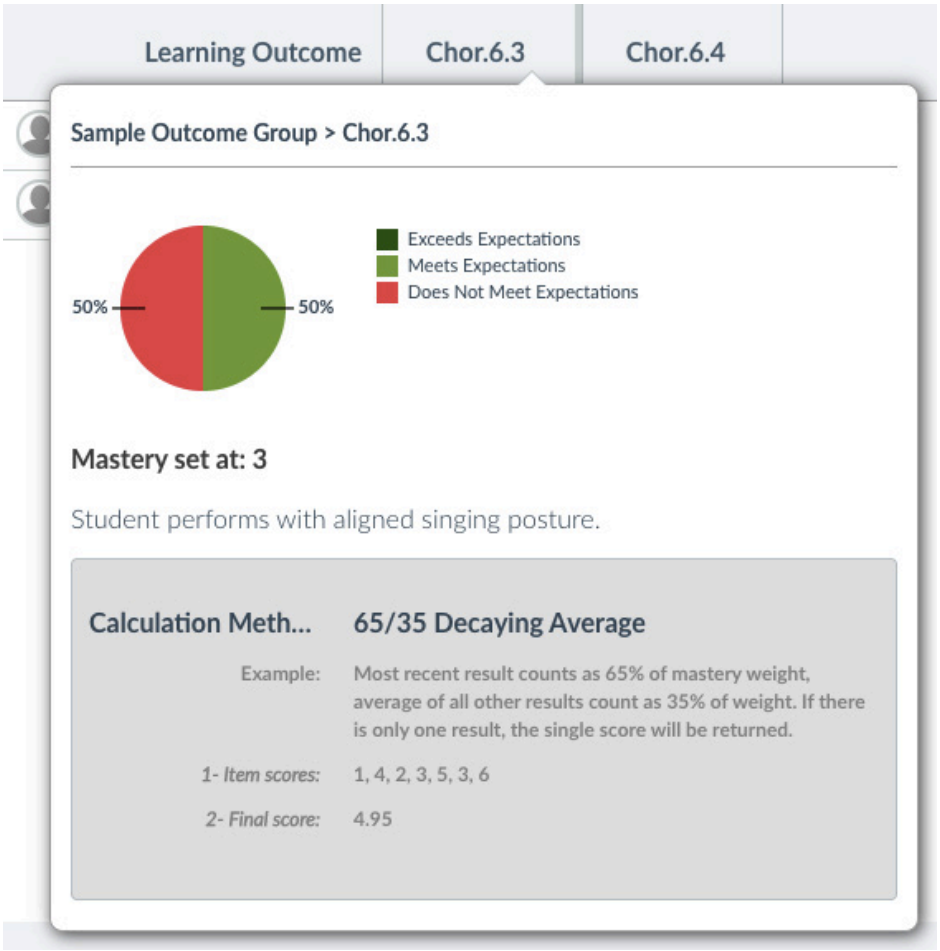


Figure 5.33 – Outcome progress graph

6. To return to the traditional Gradebook view, click on **Learning Mastery** in the top-right corner of the page, and then select **Gradebook…** from the drop-down that appears, as shown in the following screenshot:

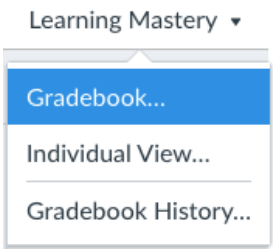


Figure 5.34 – Returning to the traditional Gradebook view

The **Student Learning Mastery Gradebook** feature provides individualized information for each outcome for students when they click on the **Grades** page of the Course Navigation menu. When the Student Learning Mastery Gradebook is enabled for your course, the **Grades** page for students will display a tab for **Assignments**, showing their traditional number grades as well as a **Learning Mastery** tab showing their progress for each outcome that has been assessed. The following screenshot shows an example of the student view of the Student Learning Mastery Gradebook visible to students on the **Grades** page of your course:

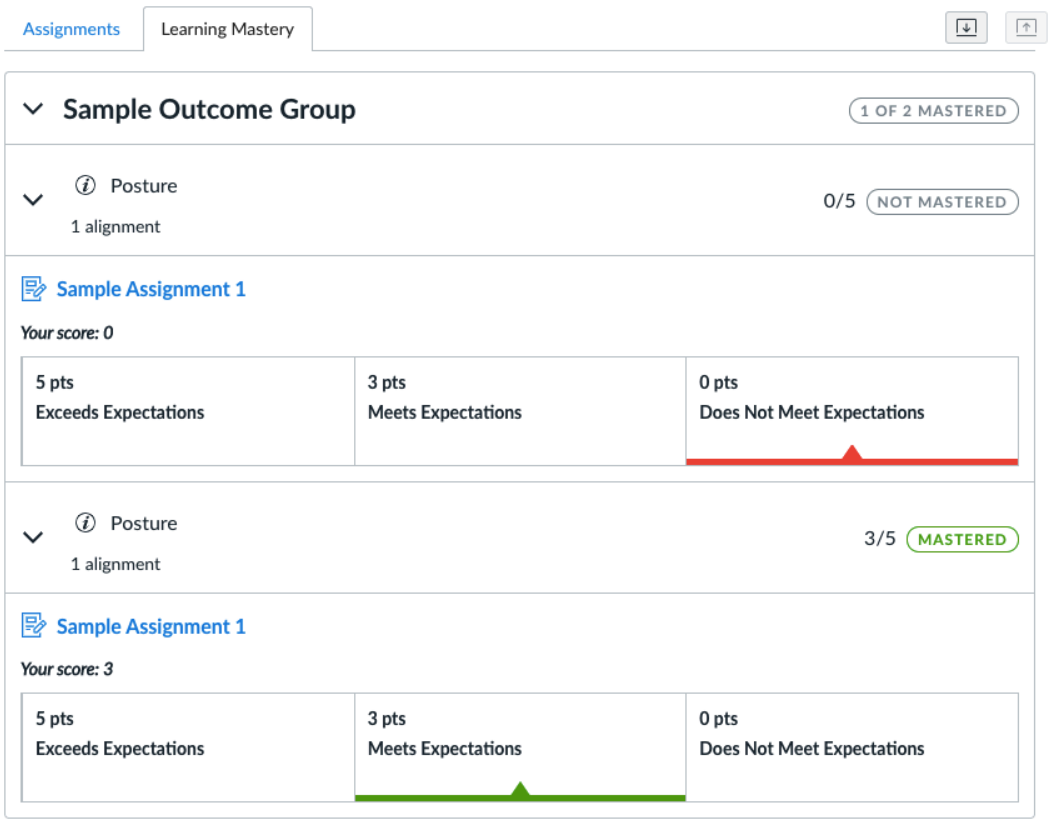


Figure 5.35 – Student view of the Student Learning Mastery Gradebook

> **Note**
>
> Remember that you can always preview features using the **Student View** feature on the right Sidebar menu of the **Settings** page or by clicking the eyeglasses icon in the top-right corner of your course's **Home** page.

The Learning Mastery Gradebook provides valuable insight into your students' progress, and students can track their own performance by reading detailed feedback available through the Student Learning Mastery Gradebook. In the spirit of improving students' performance and engagement, we will now discuss how to use the Course Analytics and Course Statistics features to enhance the efficacy of your instruction through Canvas.

Using Course Analytics and Course Statistics

Canvas allows you to easily view how users are participating within your course, when most assignments are being submitted, and how a class is doing as a whole based on a combination of individual grades. In addition, Canvas allows you to easily view specific elements that make up your course, such as the number of items within your course or how much file storage space your course takes up. To begin, let's check out how to view activity and achievement within your course using the **Course Analytics** feature.

Viewing Course Analytics

To view the Course Analytics, complete the following steps:

1. On the home page of your course, look at the right Sidebar menu. Click on the **New Analytics** button, as shown in the following screenshot:

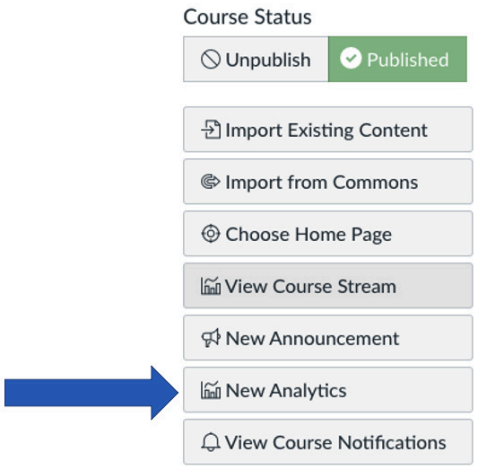


Figure 5.36 – New Analytics button

2. Once you click on the **New Analytics** button, you will see the **Course Analytics** page. This page contains four tabs along the top of the page that include data pertaining to your course. You can hover over any unfamiliar terms on the **Course Analytics** page to see a description of the term or feature. The sections are described here:

   The **Course Grade** tab shows a graph with the average overall grade for each assignment that has been graded in your course.

   The **Weekly Online Activity** tab displays a graph representing the average page views for each page within your course as well as the average participations for each page of your course. These data points are also shown in a table with a specific breakdown for each page of your course at the bottom of this tab.

   The **Students** tab lets you see a table with each student's grade, the percentage of assignments they have turned in on time, the last time they participated on Canvas, the last time they viewed a page, how many times they have viewed pages, and how many times they have participated on a page. Clicking on a participant's name will open a detailed report of their progress and activity within your course. This could be a great tool for progress updates or meetings with students or guardians.

   The **Reports** tab provides the option to generate reports showing all missing assignments, all late assignments, all excused assignments, a class roster, and your course activity.

As your course progresses while students interact with the course content, submit assignments, and receive grades, your Course Analytics will grow and change to indicate the evolution of your course from start to finish. By viewing the analytics for your course, you will have data to identify any trends in student engagement or achievement. Using this data to inform changes in your course content, teaching style, activities, or instructions can help students find greater success in your course and hone your skills as a reflective, data-driven educator.

While the Course Analytics feature allows you to track aspects of the interactions with content happening in your course, the Course Statistics feature lets you quickly and easily view a breakdown of what makes up your course.

Viewing Course Statistics

If you would like to see data regarding the makeup of activities and files that make up your course, the **Course Statistics** feature allows you to easily gather such information. This may be helpful to you in reflecting on your teaching practice to get a holistic view of the types of activities you have asked students to complete or the balance of features within Canvas you have utilized in your course. You can also track participant login information as well as the number of files uploaded or storage used in your course. To view Course Statistics for your course, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **Settings** link on the left Course Navigation menu.
2. Once the **Settings** page is open, look at the right Sidebar menu. Click on the **Course Statistics** button, which appears as the third option in the following screenshot:

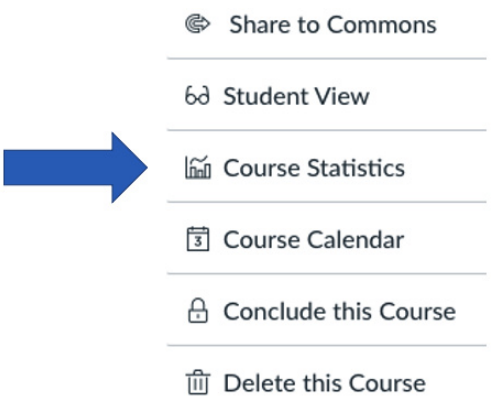


Figure 5.37 – Course Statistics button

3. The **Course Statistics** page will open, and you will be able to view the statistics by clicking through the tabs along the top of the page. The sections are described here:

   The **Totals** tab will show you the total number of activities and participants within your course.

   The **Assignments** tab will show you how many assignments of each type you have created and how many submissions have been made for each of those assignments.

   The **Students** tab will show you students who have recently logged in and their activity while logged in.

The **File Storage** tab will show you how many files you have uploaded to your course and how much storage space those files are using up. The following screenshot displays the content of the **Totals** tab, with the other tabs visible along the top:

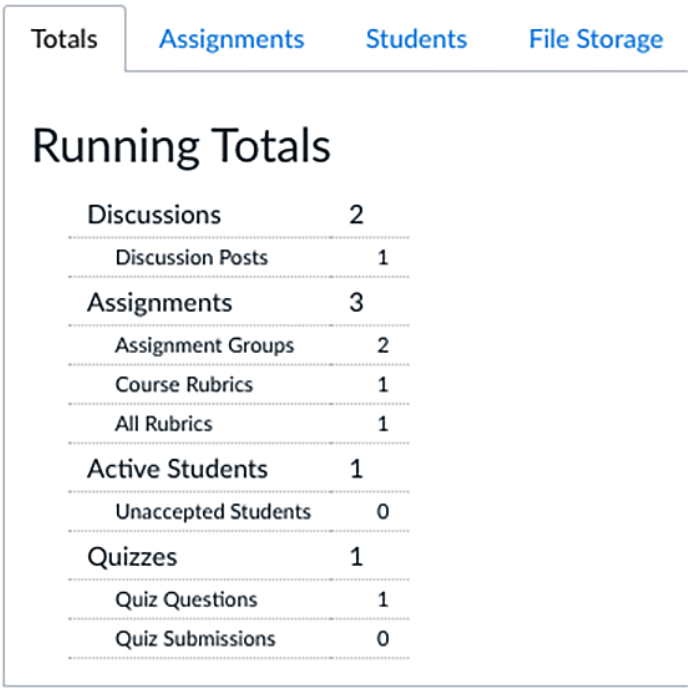


Figure 5.38 – Sample Course Statistics

As users interact with your course, both the analytics and statistics features of Canvas will become more and more useful. You will be able to see what items in your course students most frequently utilize, which can help you in adjusting the types of content you choose to include in your course and in designing your next course.

Summary

In this chapter, we began by discussing the **Collaborations** feature of Canvas, including the use of Google Docs. Next, we covered the **Outcomes** feature of Canvas, including how to create individual outcomes as well as how to organize those outcomes into outcome groups. We also covered how to find and import the **Common Core Standards** for use within your courses. After that, we learned how to create **Rubrics** to use as assessment tools for grading assignments in your course and how to incorporate outcomes into your rubrics.

After that, we learned how to enable and view the **Learning Mastery Gradebook** and the **Student Learning Mastery Gradebook** to view students' progress on outcomes added to your course. Finally, we examined how **Course Analytics** and **Course Statistics** can help you monitor activity and achievements within your course and improve engagement for the future.

Now that we have discussed many of the more advanced special features of Canvas, in the next chapter, we will look into utilizing the mobile apps available for Canvas as well as integrating content-specific apps and learning tools into your Canvas course.

6
Utilizing and Integrating Apps

With the majority of your course now up and running, and having explored many of the special features of Canvas in the last chapter, we will now learn about the mobile apps available for Canvas, along with integrating external apps and services into your Canvas course.

In this chapter, we will learn how to do the following:

- Use Canvas on your mobile devices
- Integrate external apps into your Canvas course

By the end of this chapter, you will be ready to utilize the functionality of Canvas within the mobile app and incorporate external apps into your course to enhance the functionality and efficacy of your Canvas experience.

Technical requirements

To complete this chapter, you will need the following:

- A computer with internet access
- A smartphone with internet access and app store capabilities
- A Canvas account (see *Chapter 1*, *Getting Started with Canvas*)
- A Canvas course with course content created (see *Chapter 2*, *Building Your Canvas Course*, and *Chapter 3*, *Getting Ready to Launch Your Course*)

Using Canvas on your mobile devices

For easy access and use in an increasingly mobile world, Canvas has developed individualized apps for teachers, students, and parents that enable streamlined and consistent engagement with course content and features. After you have finished building your course on a computer, the Canvas Teacher mobile app is a great way to keep up with your course from your smartphone, tablet, or other mobile device. As mentioned, there are also Canvas apps for students and for parents, so our focus in this chapter will be on using the Canvas Teacher app. Let's start by downloading the app, logging in, and then familiarizing yourself with the layout of the Canvas Teacher mobile app.

> **Note**
>
> You can also access Canvas using the internet browser on your smartphone, which provides access to most of the regular features of Canvas that you would see when using a computer. The app streamlines access to features and settings for teachers on the go, so you can choose to use the mobile app discussed here or log in to Canvas using the internet browser on your phone instead. For our discussion of the mobile app here, the following screenshots are captured from an iPhone 11 Pro that has iOS 14.3. The app is the Canvas Teacher app, Version 1.11.10. The exact procedures and layout of the app may be different if you are using a different device, operating system, or app version.

Downloading and configuring the mobile app

To download the mobile app to your device, complete the following steps:

1. Open the app store on your device. Search for `Canvas` within the search field in the app store.

2. If multiple apps appear in your search results, make sure to select the **Canvas Teacher** app, as shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 6.1 – Canvas Teacher app in store

3. Once you have found the app, follow the standard procedure to download apps from the app store on your device. For the Apple Store, tap on **GET**, which will ask you to approve the download with your Apple ID credentials. Once you enter your Apple ID credentials, the app will begin downloading to your device.

4. When the app download is complete, locate the app on your phone and tap on the icon to open it. The app icon is pictured in the following screenshot:



Figure 6.2 – Canvas Teacher app icon

5. On the screen that opens, tap the button that says **Find my school**. If your institution has provided a QR code to access your mobile app, you can tap the **QR Login** button. The **Find my school** and **QR Login** options are shown in the following screenshot:

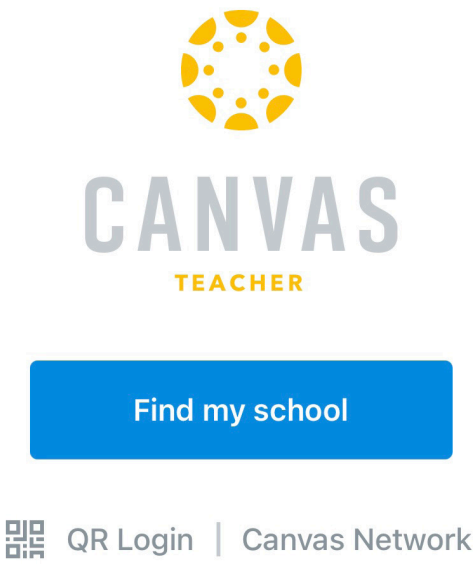


Figure 6.3 – Find my school button

6. Tap the **Find my school** button to search for your school's name and select your school from the options that appear. If you are using a **Free for Teachers** account, search for `Free` and select **Free Canvas Accounts** from the options that appear. Next, you will need to enter the login credentials that you usually use to log in to Canvas on a computer. When you have entered your login credentials, tap **Log In**. The login screen for a **Free for Teachers** account is shown in the following screenshot:

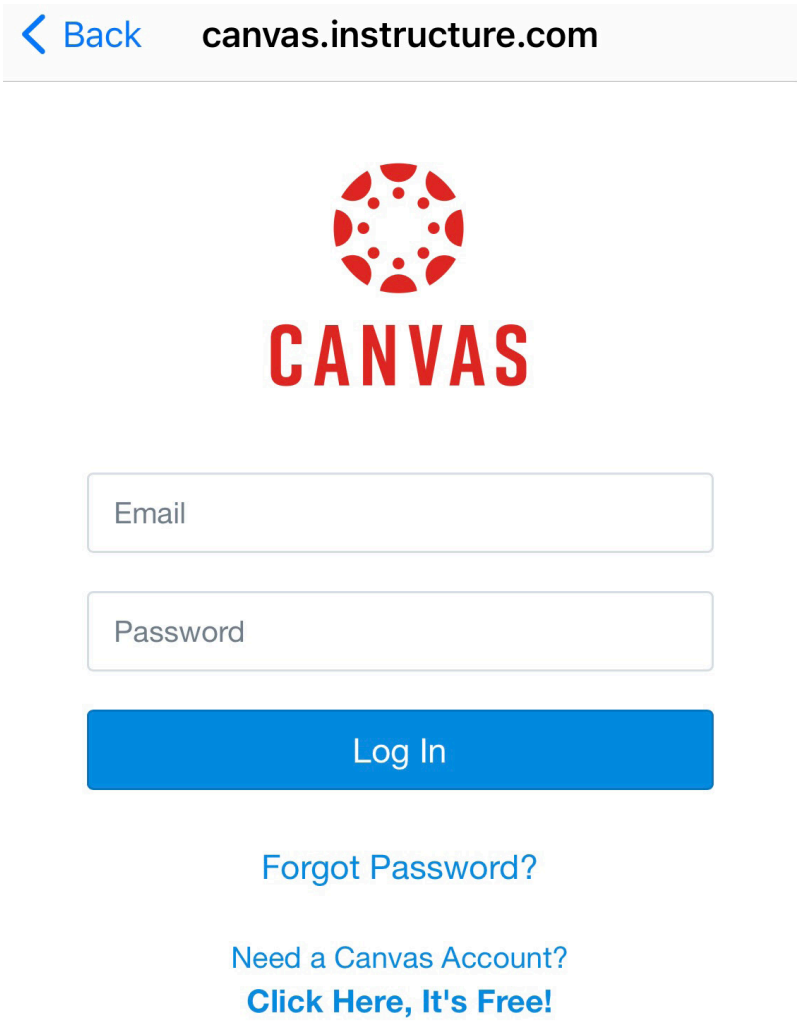


Figure 6.4 – Mobile app login screen

7. You will likely see a message asking whether you would like to enable notifications on your device from the Canvas Teacher app, and your institution may have additional login requirements enabled. Follow the instructions that appear, and you can choose your preferred option on the screen, as shown in the following screenshot:

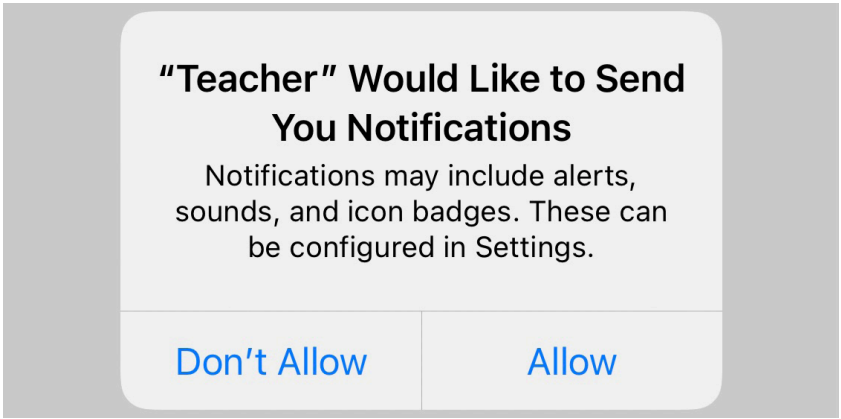


Figure 6.5 – Notifications configuration

8. From here, the **Courses** screen will open on the dashboard within the app and you can begin to use the app.

Now that we have covered how to download and configure the Canvas app on your mobile device, let's move along to actually using the app to interact with content and users within your Canvas course.

Using the features of the mobile app

When your app first opens, you will see the mobile app Dashboard displaying the **Courses** screen. The **Courses** screen displays a list of the courses with which you are involved, as pictured in the following screenshot:

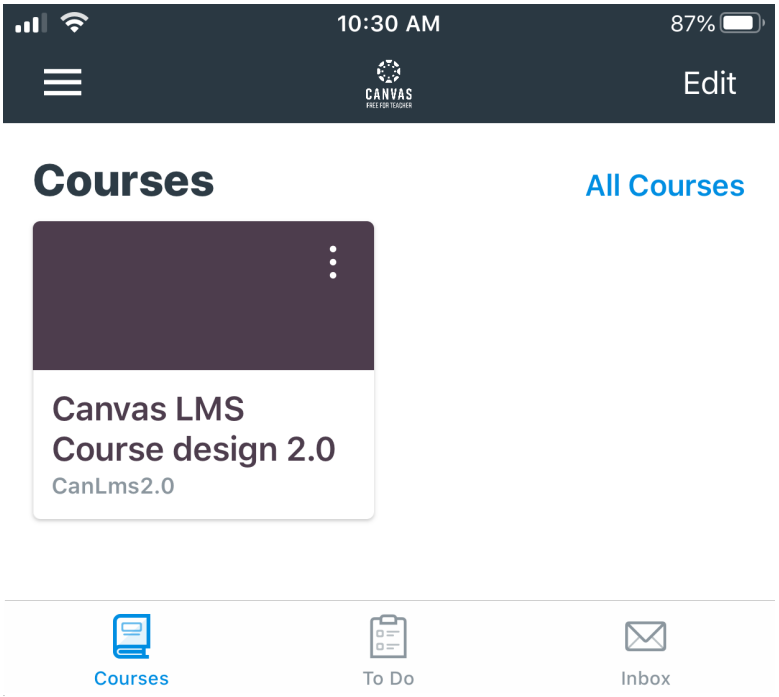


Figure 6.6 – Courses screen

On the **Courses** screen, notice the tab option to view **All Courses**—right now, you most likely only have one course listed, but when you have many courses within Canvas, you can find your courses using this option. You can also select which courses display on the **Courses** screen by tapping the **Edit** button in the top-right corner and selecting which courses you want to display on the **Courses** screen.

Looking at the bottom menu, you will see icons that allow you to view overviews of your **Courses**, **To Do** items, and **Inbox** options within the app quickly and easily.

Let's now work our way through navigating and using the three main sections of the app that are shown along the bottom menu.

Navigating your course within the mobile app

The Canvas mobile app allows you to see and do most of the same things you are able to do within your course using a computer. To view and interact with the various sections and content of your course, complete the following steps:

1. Tap on your course to select it from the list of courses on the **Courses** screen that appears when you first open the mobile app.
2. When the course screen opens, you will see the course navigation links for your course listed, as shown in the following screenshot:

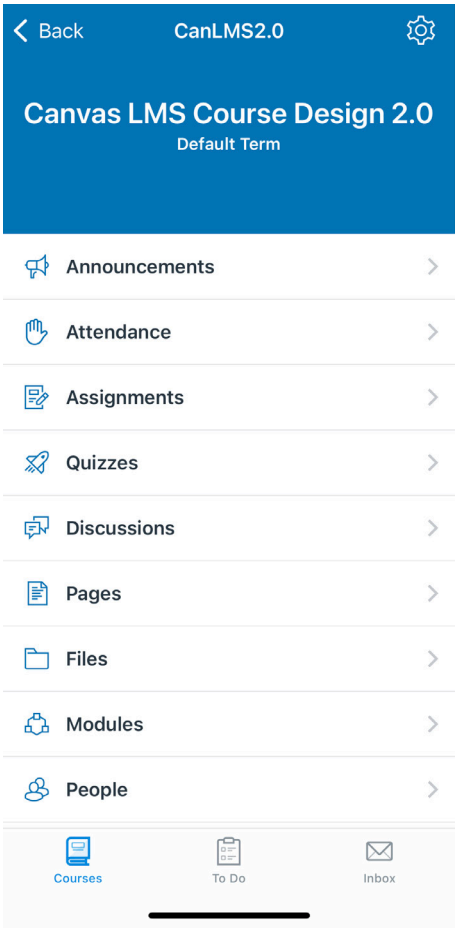


Figure 6.7 – Course Navigation links in the mobile app

3. You can tap through these options and explore the mobile version of each of these pages and features.

4. While the **Grades** page does not appear on the list of options in the mobile app, you can still view and grade activities by tapping the **Assignments**, **Quizzes**, or **Discussions** options from this list. When you open the activity you wish to view or grade, you will see an overview of the activity showing how many submissions are **Graded**, if anything **Needs Grading**, or how many are **Not Submitted**. This overview screen is shown in the following screenshot:

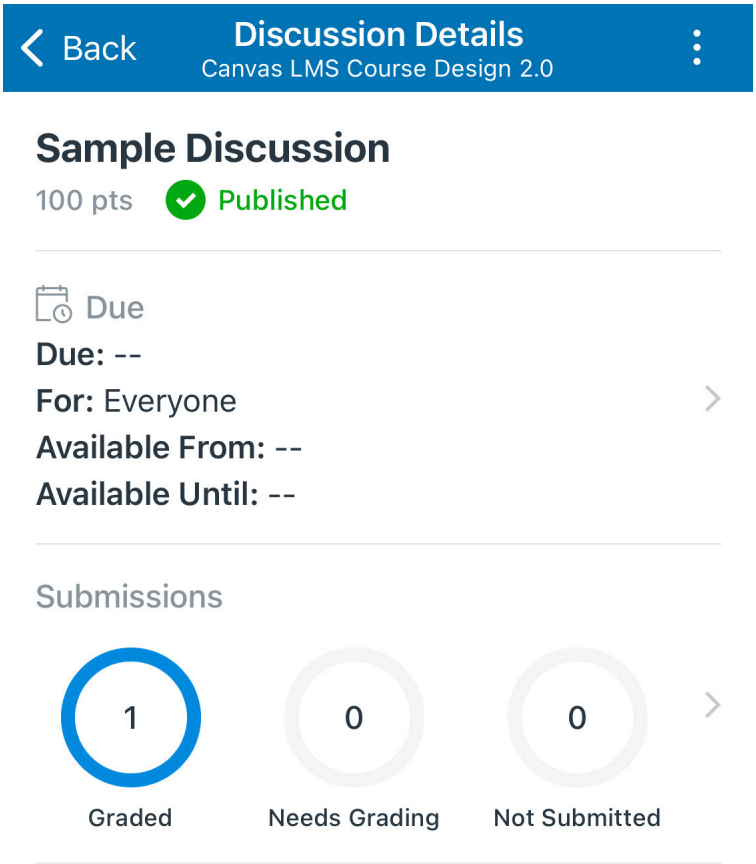


Figure 6.8 – Sample discussion overview screen

5. If you tap **Graded** or **Needs Grading**, you will see a list of student names for the activity. You can tap on any student's name to view their submission. At the bottom of their submission, you can tap the **Grades**, **Comments**, or **Files** tabs to post grades with annotations or rubrics, leave comments, or view files the student has uploaded, just as you would on the desktop version of Canvas. An example of a student submission with the **Grades** tab open is displayed in the following screenshot:

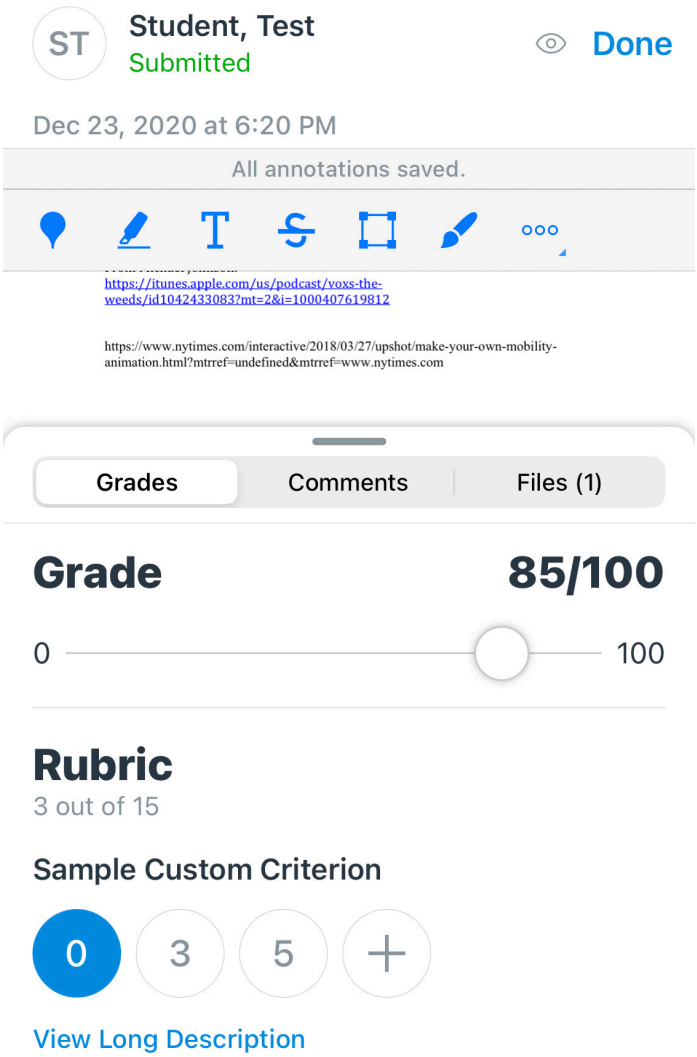


Figure 6.9 – Sample student submission with the Grades tab open

As we discussed in previous chapters, taking time to explore the various features of Canvas allows you to gain personal insight into the inner workings of each feature through trial and error. Do not hesitate to use the same approach to learning the Canvas mobile app—take some time to explore and experiment with each feature. You might find that some of the features from the desktop site appear in a different place or a different format in the mobile device, but nearly all of the functionality for instruction found in the desktop site is available within the mobile app.

Let's now look at the next icon over on the dashboard — the **To Do** feature.

Using the To Do feature of the mobile app

The mobile app is helpful to easily view what you need to do for your course while you are away from your computer. As various tasks arise for you to complete for your course, such as grading student submissions, you will see a notification appear on the **To Do** tab showing how many items you need to complete. To utilize the **To Do** feature of the mobile app, complete the following steps:

1. Tap on the **To Do** option on the bottom menu of the mobile app. You will see a list appear that identifies each task you need to complete for your course, as pictured in the following screenshot:

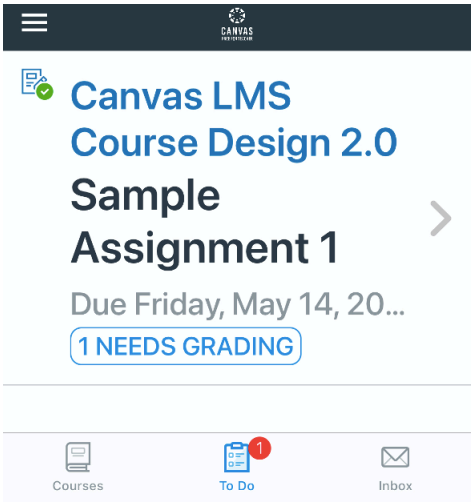


Figure 6.10 – To Do tab with notification

2. You can tap on each item in the **To Do** list to complete each task. For example, if an assignment needs to be graded as shown in the previous screenshot, tapping on the **To Do** item will open the relevant assignment and show you the newly submitted work to grade directly within the mobile app.

Most **To Do** items for instructors involve grading, and the **To Do** feature of the mobile app is a wonderful, straightforward, and easy way to keep track of what feedback and grading you need to provide for your students.

Let's now move on to discuss the final option along the bottom menu of the mobile app – the **Inbox** feature.

Viewing and sending messages within the mobile app

Within the Canvas mobile app, it is easy to communicate with other Canvas users through the **Inbox** feature, which functions in the same way as the **Inbox** feature of the desktop version of Canvas. To access and use the Inbox feature of the mobile app, complete the following steps:

1. Tap on **Inbox** on the bottom menu of the app. Your inbox will open, and you will see options along the top to view **All** messages in your Inbox, your **Unread** messages, your **Starred** messages, your **Sent** messages, and your **Archived** messages, as outlined in the following screenshot:

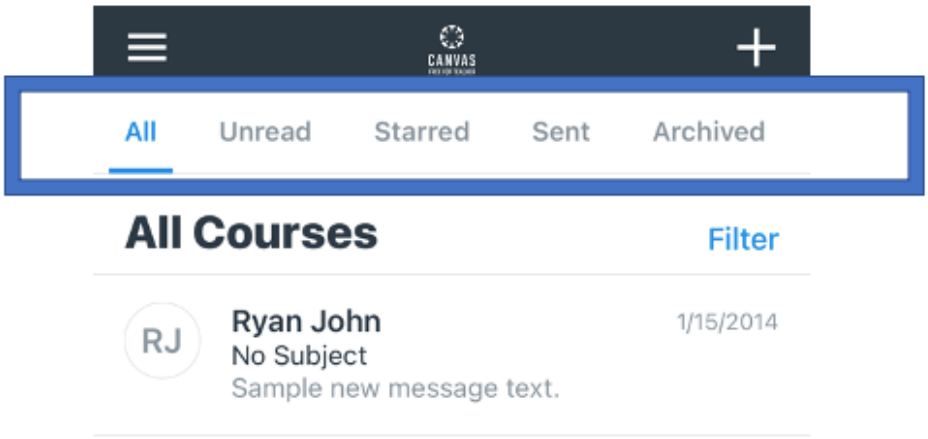


Figure 6.11 – Inbox options in the mobile app

2. Within your inbox, you will see the list of messages in your account, with the most recent messages listed at the top of the screen.

3. To open an existing message, tap on the message preview that includes the name of the sender and the beginning of the message. Once you have read the selected message, you can tap the **Reply** link that appears underneath the message, as pictured in the following screenshot:

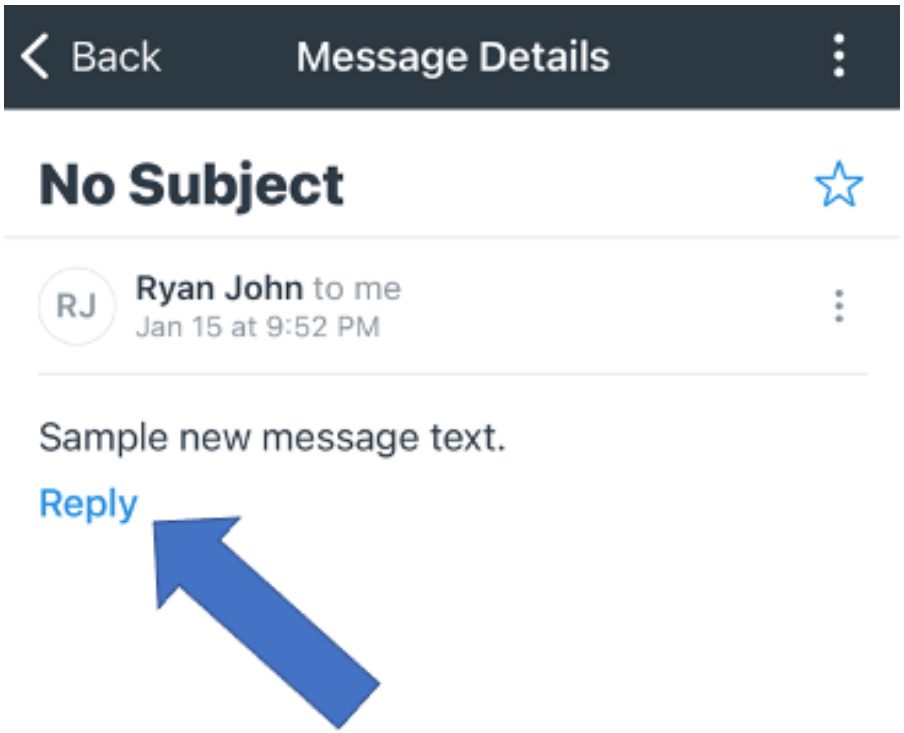


Figure 6.12 – Replying to a message

4. After you tap **Reply** on an existing message, a new screen will appear with a textbox to type your message.

5. If you would like to add an attachment to your message, tap on the icon that looks like a paperclip at the top of the message window. On the screen that opens, tap the + sign in the top-right corner, and then select whether you want to **Record Audio**, **Use Camera**, **Upload File**, or **Choose from Library**. Choose the appropriate option and follow the onscreen instructions to attach your desired media or file. The following screenshot displays the options that appear when you tap the attachment icon:

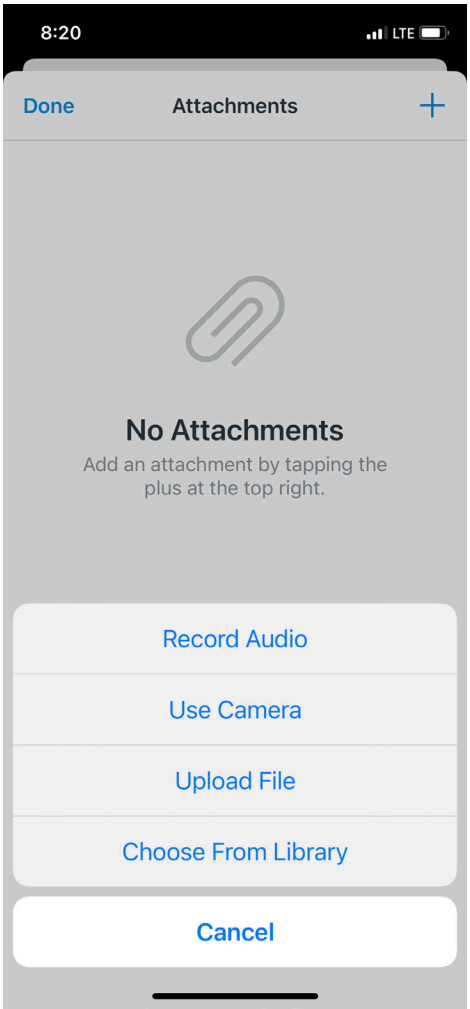


Figure 6.13 – Attachment options

6. When you are satisfied with your message, tap **Send** in the top-right corner and your message will be sent.

Within the messaging feature of the mobile app, you can also compose new messages to other Canvas users. To compose a new message, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the + icon in the top-right corner of the Inbox screen, as shown in the following screenshot:

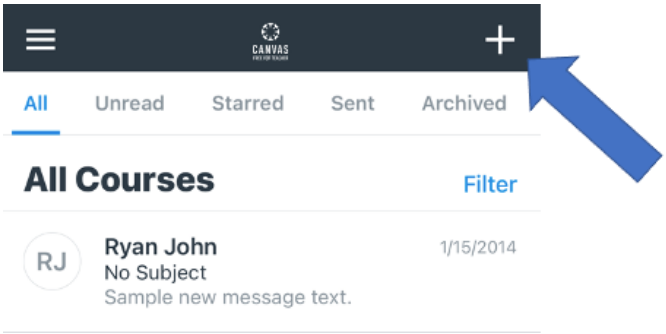


Figure 6.14 – Composing a new message

2. The first step in composing a new message is to select the course that your recipient or recipients are taking. Tap on **Select a Course**, and then choose the course in which your recipient or recipients are enrolled.
3. Next, tap on the + icon in the **To** field, which will open a window allowing you to **Search** for the recipient or to select **All** participants, certain **Teachers**, certain **Students**, or certain **Student Groups** in the course as recipients of your message. These options are shown in the following screenshot:

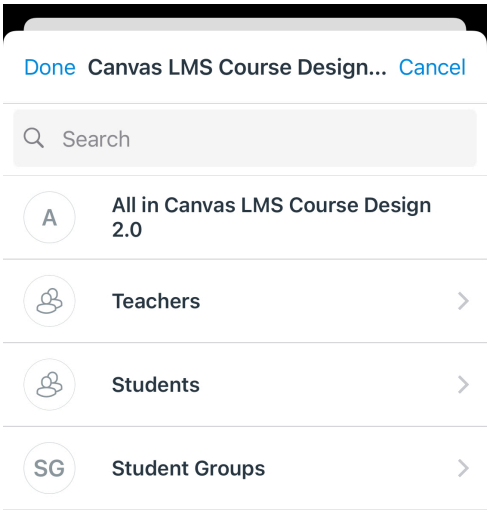


Figure 6.15 – Recipient options for a new message

4. If you select multiple recipients, you can select the **Send individual message to each recipient** option instead of including them all on the same message if you would prefer, which essentially functions like the BCC function for sending an email.
5. Once you have selected your recipient or recipients, you can type your message in the textbox that appears under the recipient list in the same way we replied to a message.
6. You can add an attachment in the same way we discussed when replying to a message.
7. When you are finished composing your message and attaching any items, tap the **Send** option in the top-right corner to send your message.

Now that we have covered the main features of the mobile app along the bottom menu, let's examine some other helpful features to customize your experience using the mobile app. We will start with customizing your notifications.

Accessing your settings within the mobile app

While you are on the go, you can use the mobile app to view and adjust your Canvas settings as well as settings specific to your mobile app. To access **Settings**, complete the following steps:

1. Tap the app options icon with three horizontal lines in the top-left corner of the app, as shown in the following screenshot:

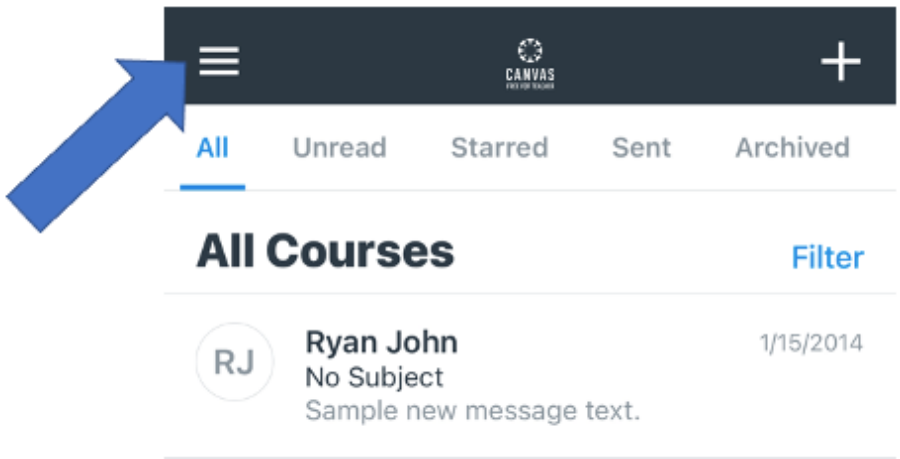


Figure 6.16 – App options icon

2. Tap on **Settings** from the menu that appears, which is shown in the following screenshot:

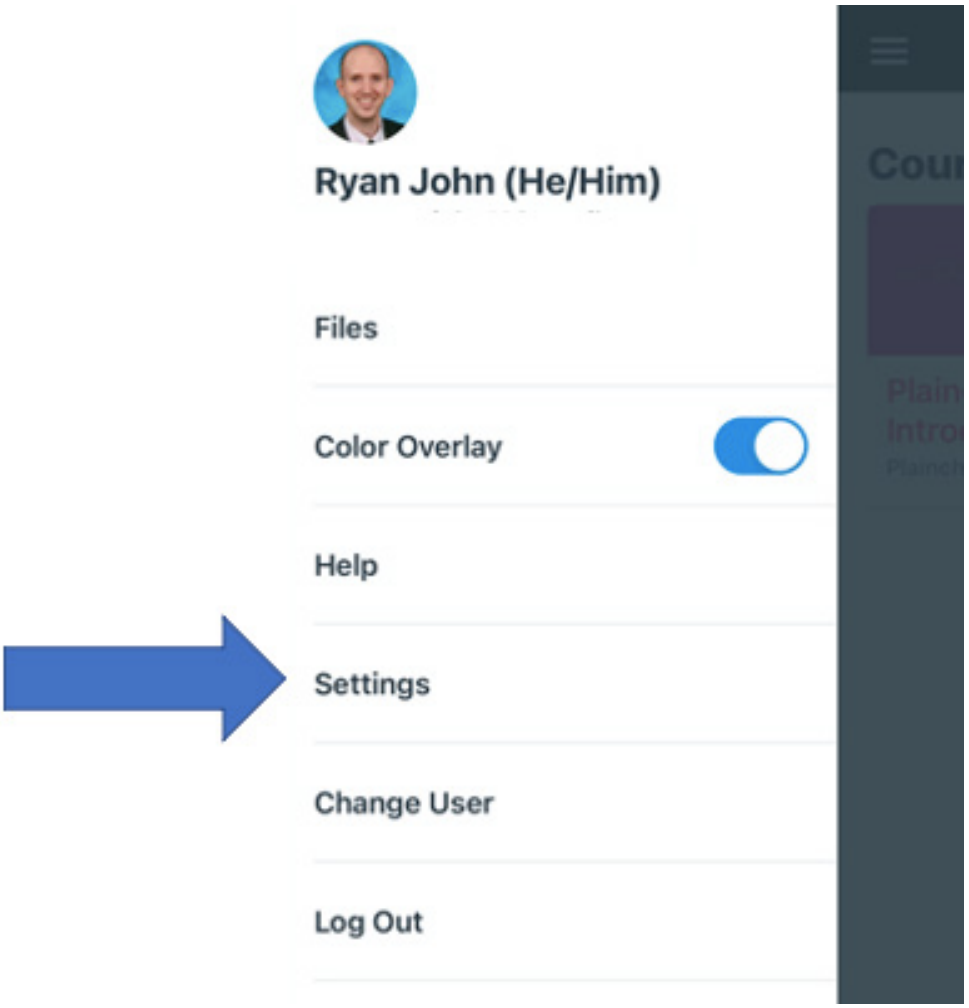


Figure 6.17 – App options menu

3. Tap any of the headings that appear on the **Settings** screen to view the options available. The **Settings** options are shown in the following screenshot:

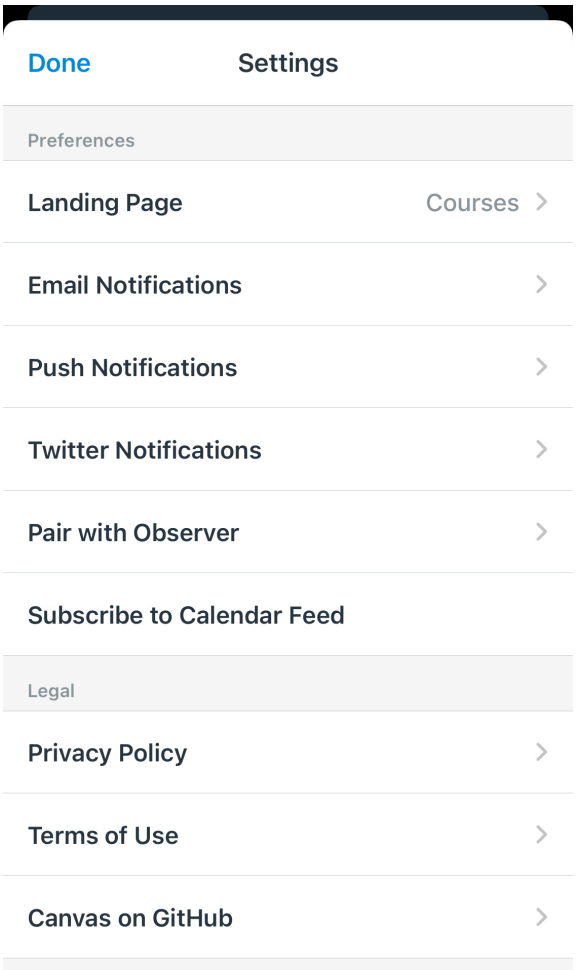


Figure 6.18 – App settings menu

4. One useful heading that allows you to adjust settings specific to the mobile app is the **Push Notifications** heading. If you tap on **Push Notifications**, you can select which types of items you receive push notifications for on your mobile device.
5. When you are finished updating or viewing your settings, tap **Done** in the top-left corner of the **Settings** window.

Having explored most options and features within the mobile app, the final feature we will discuss for the Canvas mobile app is the **Help** feature.

Finding help within the Canvas mobile app

If you need help with the mobile app, Canvas has built in a feature to find assistance. To access the help feature, open the app options menu by tapping the same icon in the top-left corner that we used to access the app settings. On the options menu that appears, tap on the **Help** option and a menu will appear with a number of options from which you can choose. This screen is pictured in the following screenshot:

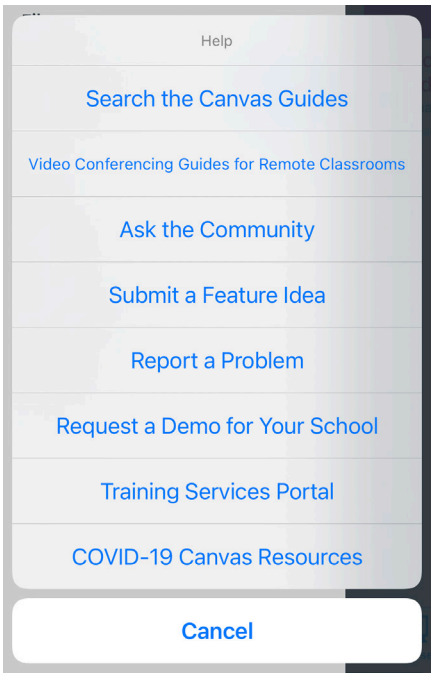


Figure 6.19 – Help options

The following points describe the main options for support available to you when you tap each option:

- **Search the Canvas Guides**: This option allows you to browse and search some of the **Frequently Asked Questions** (**FAQs**) regarding the mobile app within the Canvas Guides. We will discuss the Canvas Guides in much more depth in *Chapter 7*, *Where to Go for Help*.
- **Community Website options**: The **Video Conferencing Guides for Remote Classrooms**, **Ask the Community**, and **Submit a Feature Idea** options are all available at the `https://community.canvaslms.com/` website. This site provides information directly from Canvas as well as from other Canvas users and allows you to engage with the Canvas community to improve your practice and support the development of Canvas as a Learning Management System.

- **Report a Problem**: This option will open a new message that will allow you to tell Canvas about any problems you might be encountering with the mobile app. This option works with the **Inbox** feature of the app.
- **Other options**: The remaining options on the **Help** menu allow you to request services and access resources related to Canvas and education.

Now that we have covered how to configure and navigate the Canvas mobile app, let's move back to your computer to discuss integrating apps from external services into your course.

Integrating external apps into your course

Canvas has partnered with a number of online resources to allow you to integrate external applications into your courses. These app integrations are called **Learning Tool Interoperability** (**LTI**) and allow you to enhance the functionality of your course by sending and receiving data with outside services. There are many apps available to integrate into your course. To view the list of available apps, perform the following steps:

1. Click on the **Settings** tab at the bottom of the left side menu on your course home page.
2. Across the top of the **Settings** page and you will see tabs for various settings and options. The fourth tab, as shown in the following screenshot, is the **Apps** tab—click on it:

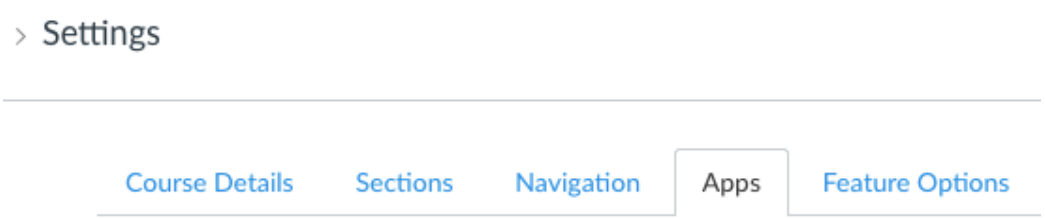


Figure 6.20 – Apps tab

3. When you open the **Apps** tab, you will see brief instructions at the top of the page with a large list of available apps displayed below, as pictured in the following screenshot:

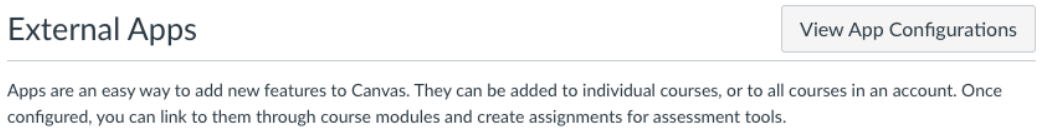


Figure 6.21 – Apps feature description

4. Take some time to scroll or search through the available apps to find options that you might wish to integrate into your course. If you hover your mouse over the icon for an app, a description will appear over the icon that will explain what integrating that app will allow you to do. For example, if you use a McGraw-Hill textbook in your course, check to see whether the textbook has any interactive online resources listed; if it does, you can integrate the McGraw-Hill app directly into your course so that your students can take advantage of the online resources directly through Canvas.

   You may wish to connect the Khan Academy app to your course to open the door for your students to explore the myriad of free learning resources offered by Khan Academy. If you know you are going to be using lots of videos during your course, consider integrating the YouTube and Vimeo apps to more easily access and embed content from these sites into your course. Select the app you would like to integrate into your course by clicking on the app icon in the main list.

5. On the app page that opens, click **+ Add App** underneath the icon and then follow any onscreen instructions that appear. Once you have followed all the instructions, the app will be integrated into your course. You may need to obtain additional information from your institution for certain apps, such as apps that require payment or access codes to use. Check in with your institution's IT or administrative team to obtain additional information you may need for integrating apps that your institution supports.

> **Note**
>
> If you are using an institutional instance of Canvas, your school has control over which apps may be integrated and how LTIs function within your instance of Canvas. Apps integrated by your institution should be fair game for use. However, if you are integrating an app at the account or course level as described in this section, it is important to ensure that you are abiding by your institution's privacy and data usage policies since LTIs facilitate the exchange of user data between Canvas and outside services. For example, some apps may use user data for marketing purposes, which may be prohibited by your institution, so it is always best to check with your IT department or administrators when integrating external apps.

As an example of how to integrate an app into your course, let's walk through the steps of installing the YouTube app for your course. Each app will function slightly differently after you have installed it into your course, but the following section will show you exactly how to install and use the YouTube app as an example.

To install the YouTube App, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Settings** page of your **Course Navigation** menu, and then click on the **Apps** tab.
2. From the list of available apps, find the **YouTube** app. Hover your mouse over the app to see a description of what the app will allow you to do. You will see that installing the app will add a YouTube icon to your Rich Content Editor that will allow you to search for and embed videos from YouTube directly to Canvas.
3. Click on the **YouTube** app. You will see a page open with more details about the **YouTube** app and what it will allow you to do within Canvas.
4. To install the app, click the blue **+ Add App** button that appears directly below the YouTube logo, as pictured in the following screenshot:

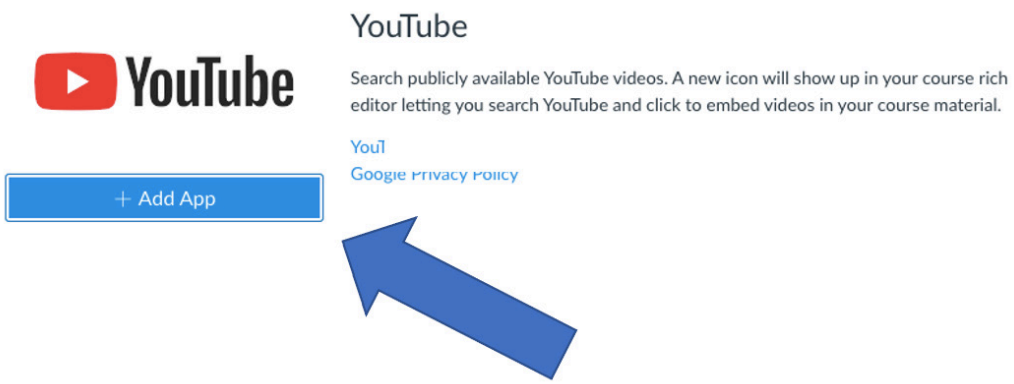


Figure 6.22 – The + Add App button

5. When you click on the **+ Add App** button, the installation will begin automatically. You will see a pop-up window appear momentarily with the name of the app and an option to add a **Channel Name** under which to organize the app in your account. Click on **+ Add App**, and the pop-up window will close. The app page will display an icon indicating that the installation is loading, and then you will see a pop-up notification that the app installation was successful, and YouTube will appear on your list of installed apps. As shown in the following screenshot, your list will only include one app once you have finished installing YouTube:

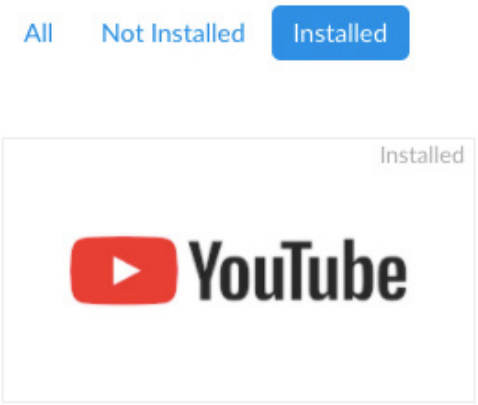


Figure 6.23 – Installed app list

6. When your installation has finished, you will be able to utilize the YouTube icon that will appear within the Rich Content Editor when you post or edit content, including assignments, content pages, discussion posts, and announcements. You will also be able to insert YouTube videos directly into course modules after integrating the app. To use the app within the Rich Content Editor, click on the YouTube icon, as highlighted in the following screenshot:

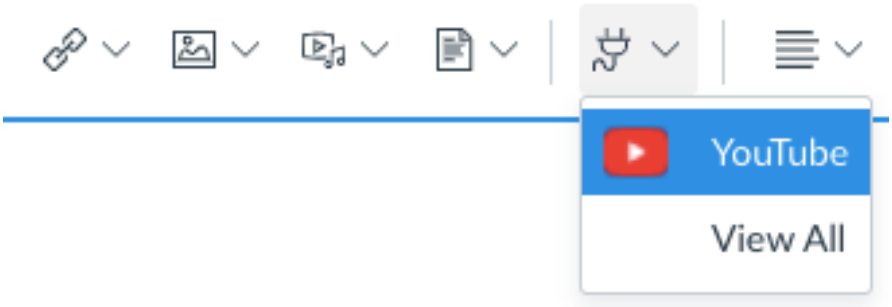


Figure 6.24 – App option shown in Rich Content Editor

7. When you click on **YouTube** under the **Apps** icon in the Rich Content Editor, a pop-up window will appear with a search bar that allows you to search for videos on YouTube. Type in your search terms and then click on **Search**.
8. From the results that appear, click on the name of the video you would like to embed, and the pop-up window will close. The selected video will appear within the Rich Content Editor textbox and will be playable once you save the item you are editing, such as a discussion post, assignment, or content page.

By utilizing the wide variety of apps available to you for installation and integration within your Canvas account, you have the opportunity to create an engaging, unique, and transformative learning experience for your students online. With the combination of your teaching expertise, easy access to your course through the mobile app, and the integration of cutting-edge apps, you have the tools to increase student engagement and achievement.

Summary

In this chapter, we focused on utilizing and integrating apps for your Canvas experience. We started with a discussion of the Canvas Teacher mobile app. We learned how to download and configure the app, view **Courses**, complete **To Do** list items, and communicate through the **Inbox** of the mobile app. We also discussed how to access your mobile app **Settings** and how to find **Help** within the app. Next, we discussed how to integrate external apps into your Canvas course to enhance your use of Canvas as well as your students' experience with Canvas. We learned how to install the **YouTube** app as an example of one of the myriad apps available for integration.

At this point, we have covered all of the basics of Canvas course design. As we move into the next chapter, we will cover the options you have to find help with questions or problems you may encounter while using Canvas. We will look specifically at the range of options found within Canvas, as well as help options available to you outside of Canvas.

Section 3: Practical Ideas and Resources

In *Section 3*, you will learn where to find help if you run into questions or problems using Canvas. You will also discover ideas for practical applications and integrations you can use within your own teaching and resources for further reading and exploration to strengthen your own teaching and understanding.

This section contains the following chapters:

- *Chapter 7*, *Where to Go for Help*
- *Chapter 8*, *Now You're Ready!*
- *Appendix: References and Resources*

7
Where to Go for Help

As you work through building and teaching your Canvas course, you are bound to run into questions or concerns regarding your course. In some instances, you might encounter error messages, broken links, or other problems within your course. Fortunately, Canvas has a vast number of built-in resources that you can utilize to help solve your problems. In addition, there are other resources available online or through your institution that can help you to solve problems and answer any questions you may encounter.

In this chapter, we will discuss a number of options you have, both built into Canvas or available elsewhere, in terms of getting help with Canvas should you run into trouble. Topics covered in this chapter include the following:

- Searching and using the Canvas Guides
- Reporting a problem with Canvas
- Obtaining pricing information for the use of Canvas at your institution
- Requesting a new feature for Canvas
- Finding help from your institution's tech support team

To begin, let's start with the help options that Canvas offers from within the site.

Technical requirements

To complete this chapter, you will need the following:

- A computer with internet access
- A Canvas account (see *Chapter 1*, *Getting Started with Canvas*)

Finding help within Canvas

In the **Free for Teachers** instance of Canvas, the most accessible place to find help within Canvas is the **Help** icon at the bottom of the left **Global Navigation** menu, as shown in the following screenshot:

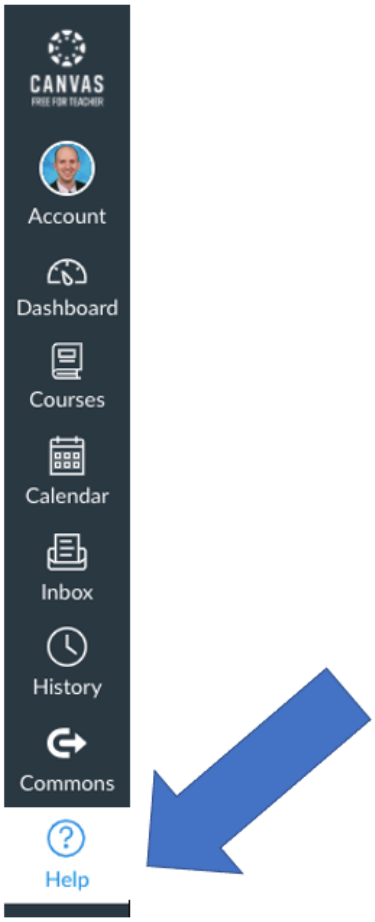


Figure 7.1 – Help icon on the left Global Navigation menu

The help option of the **Global Navigation** menu is visible on the vast majority of pages within Canvas, with the exception of certain pages, such as the **SpeedGrader**. The ease of accessibility to support within Canvas allows you and your students to troubleshoot and solve your own problems quickly and easily. Clicking on this icon will open the **Help** pop-out menu for Canvas, which provides you with the options pictured in the following screenshot:

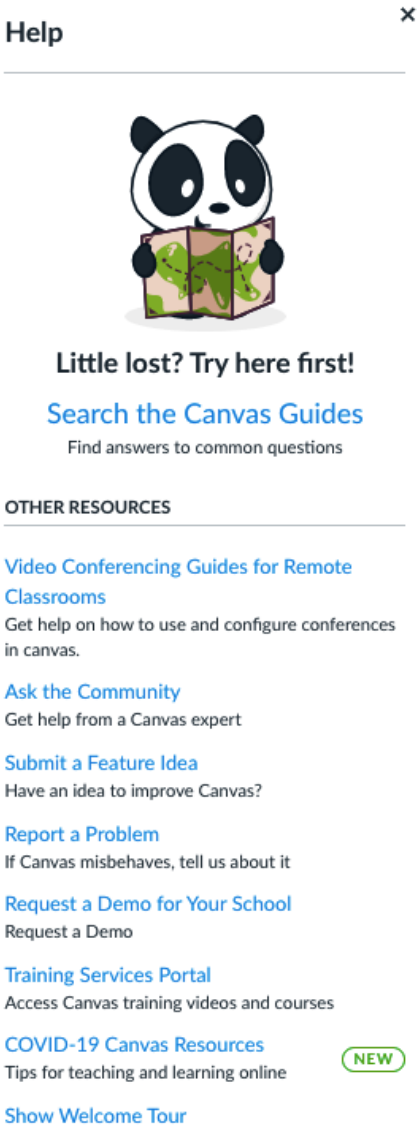


Figure 7.2 – Help menu

The first option suggested, **Search the Canvas Guides**, brings you to the hub of Canvas' online support resources. Let's begin by exploring the Canvas Guides within the **Help** menu and learning how to find what you need within this support resource.

> **Note**
>
> As mentioned throughout this book, institutions have great flexibility in customizing their instance of Canvas, so if you are using an institutional instance of Canvas, the **Help** feature and menu shown in the previous screenshots may be hidden, may appear differently, or may be in a different place. If you do not see the icons or options shown here, keep an eye out for any help or support options you see within your instance of Canvas or contact your IT department directly for assistance.

Exploring the Canvas Guides

If you need help with Canvas, you can either browse or search the Canvas Guides, or you can ask the Canvas Community for help. To begin, let's examine how to browse and search the Canvas Guides for the information you need.

Browsing and searching the Canvas Guides

The Canvas Guides offer you a huge number of user manuals and instructions. Compared to other websites, the layout of the Canvas Guides closely resembles a **Frequently Asked Questions** (**FAQs**) format, wherein you are able to browse or search for the question or problem you are facing, and then click on the question to see the answer. When you click on **Search the Canvas Guides** in the **Help** pop-out menu, you are brought to the **Canvas Guides** page, pictured in the following screenshot, which lists a number of guidance pages that are constantly updated by the Canvas operating team:

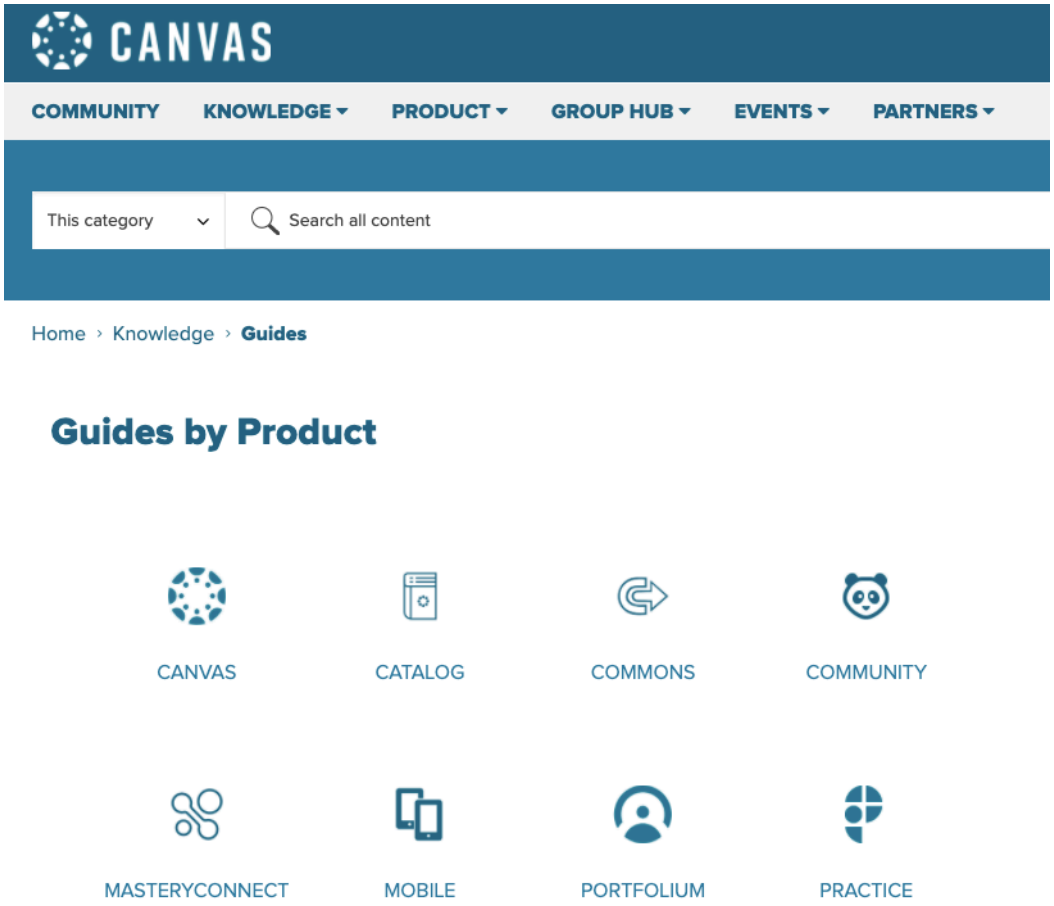


Figure 7.3 – Canvas Guides options

From the main **Canvas Guides** page, you can search for a question or for the feature with which you are having trouble in the **Search all content** search bar at the top. In addition, you can browse through multiple guides for the product or feature you are having trouble with, including **CANVAS**, **CATALOG**, **COMMONS**, **COMMUNITY**, **MASTERYCONNECT**, **MOBILE**, **PORTFOLIUM**, and **PRACTICE**.

While you may use any or all of these products available through Canvas as an educator, we will focus on help with the first option, **CANVAS**, in this chapter. When you click on the **CANVAS** icon, a page will open that allows you to browse for help within the sections shown in the following screenshot:

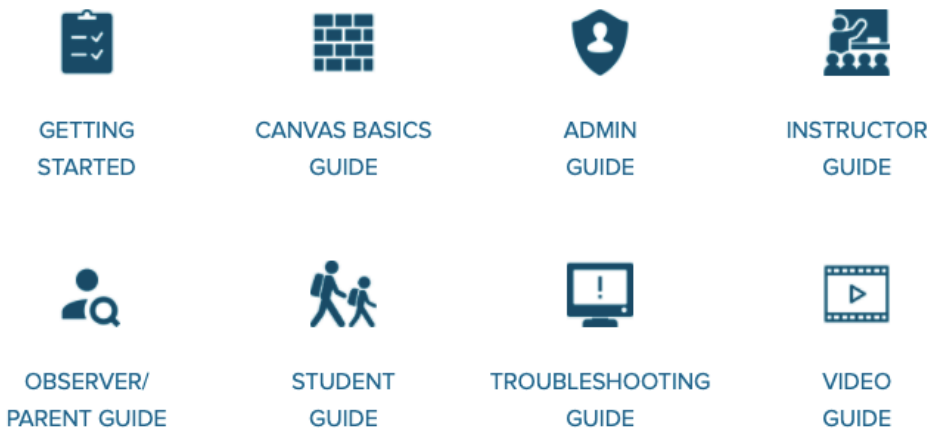


Figure 7.4 – Topics to browse within the Canvas Guides

The preceding sections are described in the following bullet points:

- **GETTING STARTED**: This section offers an Admin Tutorial that includes an introduction and six lessons focused on helping people at an institution such as members of the IT team set up and configure Canvas appropriately for an institution. The content of this section will likely not be relevant for most instructors using Canvas, but may provide helpful insight for those looking to understand how Canvas works on a technical, behind-the-scenes level.
- **CANVAS BASICS GUIDE**: This section is a great place to start with basic questions and offers you many guides to view related to **General Information**, **Canvas Features**, and **Mobile Features**. The linked guides under each of these headings provide specific, FAQ-style explorations of various common questions and features you may encounter using Canvas. You can browse these guides to answer questions you may have or to learn more about the features of the desktop and mobile app versions of Canvas.
- **ADMIN GUIDE**: This section provides guidance on 24 aspects of Canvas that would be helpful for school administrators or IT department members for customizing and configuring Canvas for an institution. This is another section that will likely not be relevant for most instructors using Canvas but may be useful if you wish to explore and understand how various features of Canvas work.

- **INSTRUCTOR GUIDE**: This section will likely be the most useful to you as an instructor using Canvas. The Instructor Guide section provides guidance on over 33 topics and features you may encounter while using Canvas. Nearly all of these topics are covered in this book, and the Canvas Guides listed on this page provide up-to-date information on the features and tools available to use in Canvas.
- **OBSERVER/PARENT GUIDE**: This section is a great resource to share with students' guardians to help them understand and effectively engage with Canvas. The Observer/Parent Guide provides streamlined information on 13 topics and features of Canvas for guardians that will help them support their child's education.
- **STUDENT GUIDE**: The Student Guide is another great resource to share directly with students to help ensure that they know how to use the features of Canvas clearly. It is best practice to explicitly teach your students how to use each feature of Canvas as you provide activities and assignments for them to complete, and this list of Canvas Guides can also help you, as the instructor, know how to introduce and explain over 22 features of Canvas to your students.
- **TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE**: This section provides useful information divided into categories related to your user type, including **Instructor**, **Student**, **Admin**, and **All Users**. The Canvas Guides linked under these headings provide assistance and suggestions to solve problems you may encounter while trying to use certain features based on factors including your device, account settings, internet connection, or browser preferences.
- **VIDEO GUIDE**: The Canvas Video Guide offers you up-to-date video tutorials for a huge variety of features and tasks you might undertake while using Canvas. These videos are tremendously helpful, so take some time to look through the options available to you on this page.

As you browse through each of these categories, you will be able to read through hundreds of up-to-date pages that show you exactly how to accomplish certain tasks, complete with step-by-step screenshots and, in many cases, video tutorials. While you have already learned much of the information covered in many of the tutorials from the first six chapters of this book, the Canvas Guides serve as an easily accessible and constantly updated resource for you as you experiment and grow in your knowledge of Canvas.

Searching the Canvas Guides

While browsing the Canvas Guides can be very helpful, you also have the option to search the Canvas Guides by entering search terms into the search bar on any of the Canvas Guides pages.

To search the Canvas Guides, complete the following steps:

1. At the top of any Canvas Guides page, click into the **Search all content** bar that appears at the top of the page, as shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 7.5 – Search all content option

2. Type in your question or search terms, and you will see a list of suggested Canvas Guide articles appear below the search bar. You can either click on the title of a Canvas Guide directly that you think will help with your question, of you can press the *Enter* or return key on your keyboard to search for more results.
3. If you press *Enter* or return, you will be taken to a search results page where you will be able to browse through all of the Canvas Guide results that might pertain to your question based on the words included in your search. You can browse through the search results to find the article that will best address your question.
4. When you find the article that seems to address your question, click on the boldface title of the article. You will be taken to the article page where you can find instructions and guidance to address your question.

The Canvas Guides are an excellent place to find answers to questions that might arise as you are creating, designing, or teaching your course. While you may be able to find answers to most of your questions in the Canvas Guides, we will explore other resources for help within Canvas in the following sections.

Exploring other resources

Below the Canvas Guides link on the **Help** menu, you will see **Other Resources** listed. The first option, **Video Conferencing Guides for Remote Classrooms**, will take you to a list of Canvas Guides focused on video conferencing for remote learning. Feel free to explore those guides to gain further information on video conferencing. The next option allows you to **Ask the Community** for help with anything you could not find within the Canvas Guides and post specific questions that other members of the Canvas community can answer.

Browsing and posing questions to the Canvas Community

To access the Canvas Community forums where you can browse and search for answers to questions that other users have posed, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Ask the Community** option from the **Help** pop-out menu on Canvas.
2. Alternatively, you can click on the **Community** link on the top menu of any Canvas Guides page, as indicated in the following screenshot:

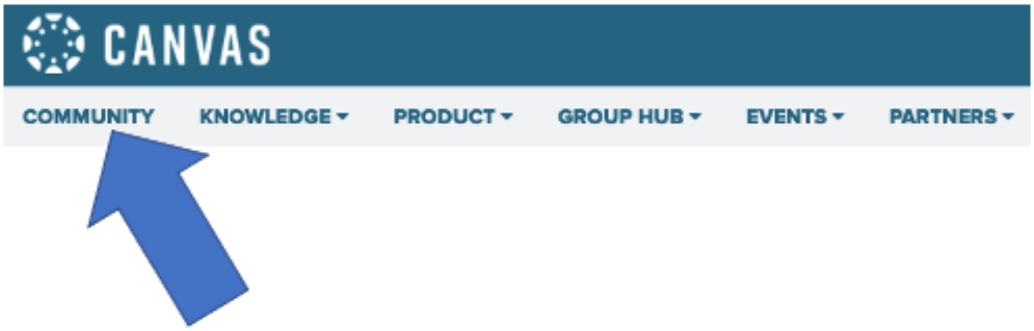


Figure 7.6 – Community link

3. You will be taken to the Canvas Community page, which displays a number of forums through which you can browse or search. To find the forum in which you can ask a question to the community, scroll down and click on the icon related to your role in Canvas, most likely the **Instructor** role, as shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 7.7 – Instructor role forum

4. Once you have navigated to the appropriate community forum, you can browse the page or search for your question by typing your question into the search bar at the top of the page.

If you are unable to find your question within the Community Forums, you can choose to **Ask a question** to the community for other users to answer. To post a question, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Ask a question** button above the **Community Activity** section of any Community page, as shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 7.8 – Ask a question button

2. A page will open that will allow you to provide a **Subject** for your post, **Select Location** to indicate which community forum it should be posted to, and to enter the **Body** of your post that will describe what you are encountering or wondering about. You will notice when you type in your subject that related topics appear below your question that may assist in answering your question. If none of the related topics meet your needs, proceed to describe what you are encountering in the main textbox.
3. You can format the text of your post using the editing buttons underneath the main textbox. These options function the same way as the options in the Rich Content Editor found elsewhere in Canvas.
4. When you have finished typing your question, click on the **Post** button in the bottom-right corner of the screen. Your question will be added to the community forum and other users will be able to see and respond to your question.

Once your question is posted to the community forum, you will be able to see when another Canvas user has posted a reply and the status of your question changes to **Solved**. Depending on your notification settings, you might receive an email notifying you that another user has responded to your post. While we're in the Community section of Canvas, let's discuss how to respond to questions other users have posted.

Responding to questions from the Community

The Community forums work well when everyone combines their knowledge to help one another in confusing situations, so if you see a question that you know how to answer or that reflects one of your own questions, go ahead and help out the community by responding to that question.

To respond to a question in the Community forums, complete the following steps:

1. Navigate to the Community forums in the same way you would to browse or ask questions. Browse the listed posts or look at the **Unanswered Topics** section on the right-hand side of the screen to view questions that you might be able to answer.
2. Once you see a post that you can help with or that reflects your own question, click on the boldface post subject. The post page will open, displaying the subject at the top, the main body of the question below, and any responses that other users have posted in the **Replies** section below the question.
3. One of the options you have in the Community forums is to tell the community that you would also like to know the answer to a question by adding **Kudos** to the question. Underneath the main body of the question, you will see a button with a thumbs up icon that you can click to add **Kudos** to the post, as pictured in the following screenshot:



Figure 7.9 – Kudos icon

4. If you would like to post a comment on the question answering the question, sharing similar feedback, or responding to other users' comments, scroll down on the page to the reply textbox underneath the **Replies** section and click **Reply…** to type your response, as shown in the following screenshot:

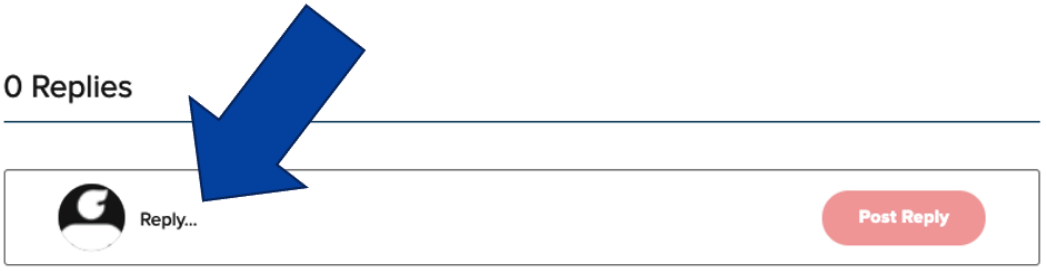


Figure 7.10 – Starting a reply to a post

5. Once you click **Reply…**, you will see a comment box with a Rich Content Editor and options below to add an attachment or request notifications when others reply, as shown in the following screenshot:

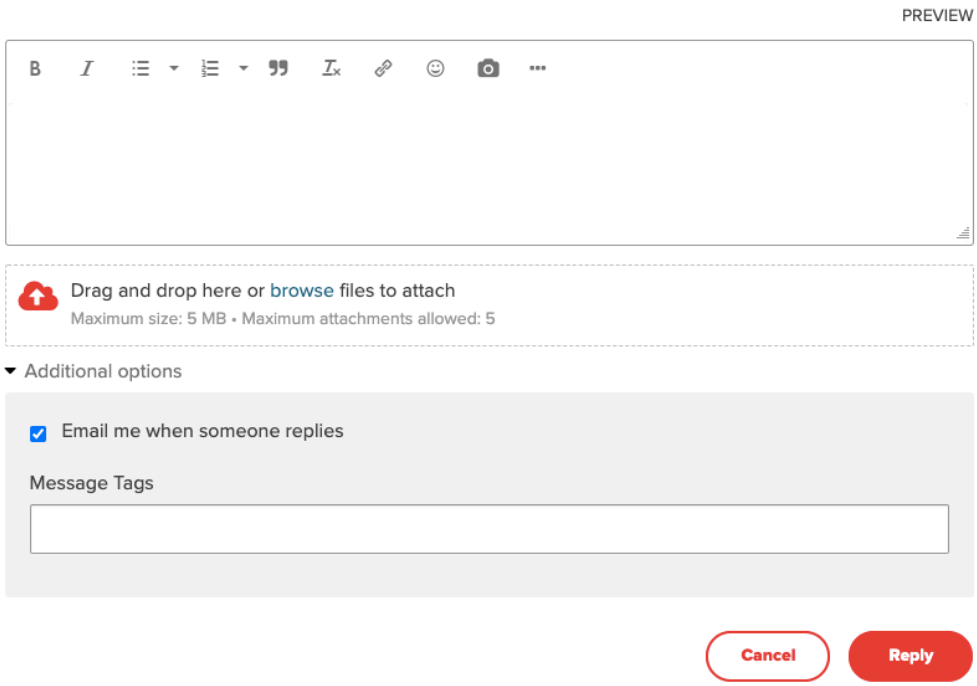


Figure 7.11 – Replying to a post options

6. When your comment is complete, click on the **Reply** button in the bottom-right corner, and your comment will be posted publicly for other users to see.

The Canvas Guides and the Community forums offer you a huge wealth of knowledge regarding Canvas. In your use of Canvas, you may come up with ideas for new features to add to Canvas, which is the next option on the **Other Resources** list of the help menu.

Submitting a feature idea

In your use of Canvas, you might come up with an idea for a feature that Canvas does not yet offer. As Canvas is an ever-evolving and constantly improving system that adapts its technology to the needs of the educators who use it, Canvas takes your suggestions very seriously. Before requesting a feature, double-check the Canvas Guides and the Community forums to make sure that the feature does not already exist. If you confirm that your idea hasn't yet been implemented, go ahead and request a new feature.

To request a feature, complete the following steps:

1. Open the **Help** menu from the left **Global Navigation** menu, and then select the **Submit a Feature Idea** option, as pictured in the following screenshot:

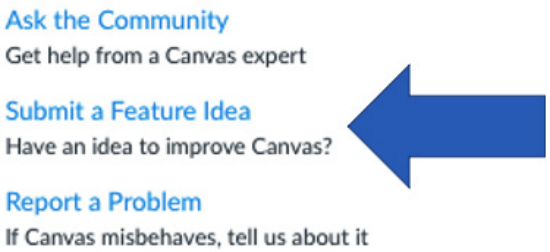


Figure 7.12 – Submit a Feature Idea link

2. A new tab or window will open in your browser, and you will see the Community forums page for new feature suggestions. As mentioned previously, make sure that you search the forums for your suggestion before adding a new suggestion. If your idea is not already listed or available, click on the **Suggest an idea** button, as shown in the following screenshot:

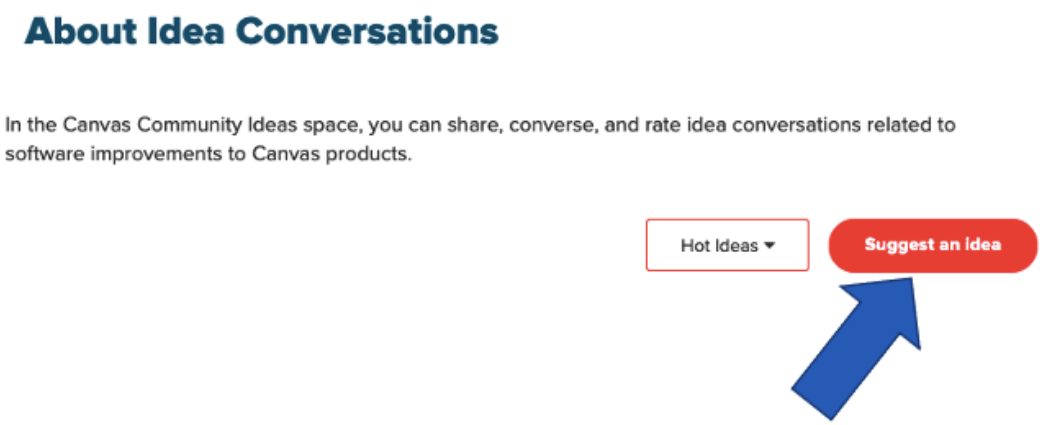


Figure 7.13 – Suggest an idea button

3. On the page that opens, you will see suggestions for consideration when suggesting an idea, including a link to **Guidelines for creating a new idea conversation** that it would be helpful to read before submitting your request. Review this link for specific tips about how to suggest a feature and what you can do to increase the likelihood that your feature will be implemented in the future.
4. Once you have read these suggestions, enter a title for your feature to search for any similar features or ideas before submitting your ideas by clicking the **Check title** button.
5. Review any results for similar ideas that appear. If you do not see your idea anywhere in the search results, click **Continue and Post** to proceed with sharing your idea.
6. On the page that opens, enter the **Idea Subject** for your suggestion, followed by the **Body** of your suggestion, including a detailed description of the feature you would like to suggest. As with the other textboxes you have used within the Canvas, you can adjust the formatting using the menu below the main textbox.
7. Below your description, you can enter other information to help the community find your suggestion such as **Idea Labels** and **Idea Tags** with relevant keywords to your feature idea.
8. When you have entered all of the details of your suggestion, click on the **Post** button in the bottom-right corner.

Once you have submitted your suggestion, other users will be able to see your request and personnel from Canvas will file it into the appropriate category on the **Idea Conversations** page. Should your suggestion be chosen for implementation, you will most likely receive feedback from a Canvas employee. Suggested ideas include statuses such as **Open for Conversation**, **On Beta**, or **Completed**, indicating where the suggestion stands with Canvas.

The following screenshot shows the three suggestions, each with a different status:



Figure 7.14 – Idea Status updates

While your suggestions are very valuable and many user suggestions are later implemented, not all suggested features will be chosen for implementation. Your suggestion might be set aside for later discussion and can be brought back to the forefront if a large number of users express interest in seeing your suggestion implemented.

Now that we have looked into requesting features from Canvas, let's take a look at how to report features that are not working properly within Canvas.

Reporting a problem

While designing, building, or teaching your course, you might run into features that are simply not working. Usually, you will be able to tell if something is not working by means of an error message appearing at the top of your screen or getting displayed on the page you are trying to view. Should you encounter an error message, the message might include a link to report the problem. If not, you can tell Canvas about the issue through the **Help** menu.

> **Note**
>
> Many institutions have their own helpdesk or support ticket system, and if you are using an institutional instance of Canvas, your school may have integrated a link to their own support system into your instance of Canvas. While the following section explains how to report a problem directly to Canvas, it's a good idea to check with your institution's IT team when you run into errors that may be specific to your instance of Canvas first.

To report a problem, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Help** link on the left **Global Navigation** menu of Canvas.
2. From the pop-out **Help** menu, click on **Report a Problem**, which appears as the third option in the following screenshot:

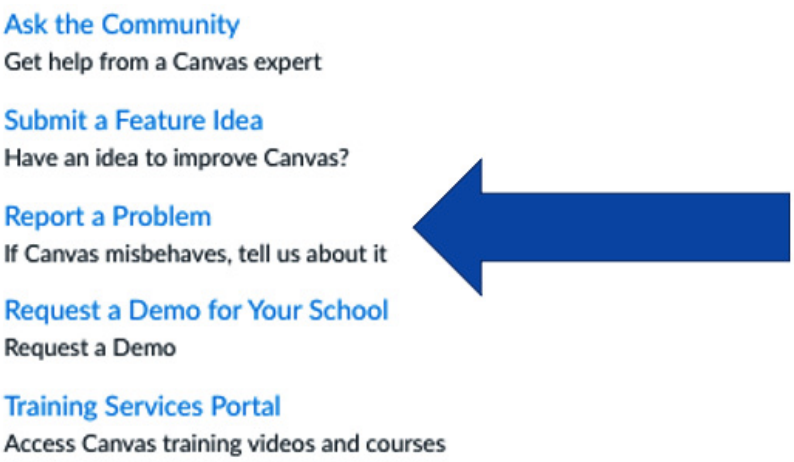


Figure 7.15 – Report a Problem link

3. This will open a dialog window that allows you to input the **Subject**, **Description**, and **Priority** of your problem. You will notice at the top of the window that you are submitting a ticket for a personal response from a member of the Canvas support team. Also notice that the dialog window includes a link to the Canvas Guides as a reminder to check the Canvas Guides and Community forums first before submitting a ticket. This helps reduce redundant help requests, which in turn allows the Canvas support team to respond to your problems more quickly. The dialog window to report a problem is pictured in the following screenshot:

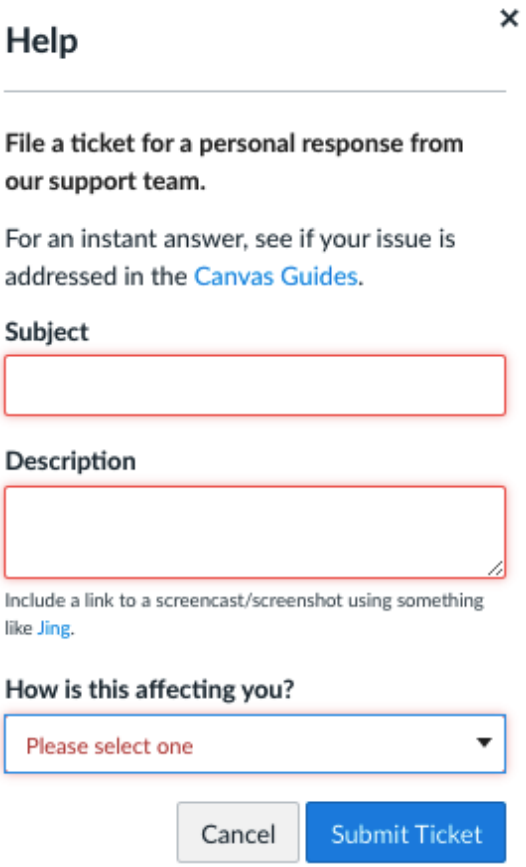


Figure 7.16 – Report a Problem dialog window

4. You can enter the **Subject** of your problem, which will offer the support team member an instant idea of what you're encountering, and then you can enter a detailed **Description** of the problem.

> **Note**
>
> When entering a description, make sure that you include each step you went through before encountering the problem. For example, if you encounter an error message every time you try to view a custom content page, describe how you are navigating to the page and exactly what is displayed each time you receive the error message.

5. Above the **Description** textbox, you will see a message requesting that you include a link for a screencast or screenshot that will show the support team member exactly what you're encountering. You can follow the suggested link to download the recommended software that will allow you to create a video screencast for free. Look ahead to the following section of this chapter if you would like to include a screencast.
6. When you have finished typing the description of your problem, click on the drop-down menu underneath the question **How is this affecting you?** to select the priority of your question. From the options that are displayed, you will notice the user-friendly language that helps you gauge the importance of your problem in order to report it to the Canvas support team, though your selection may not directly impact the speed of response to your problem. You will see a number of options, as shown in the following screenshot:

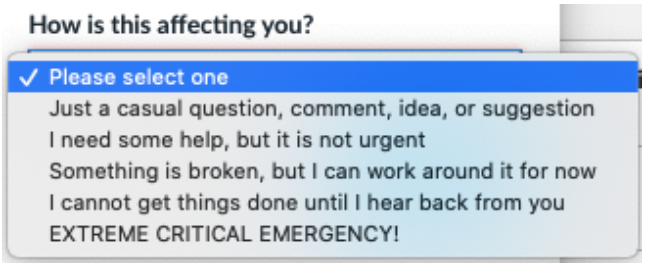


Figure 7.17 – Problem priority options

These options are described in the following bullet points:

Just a casual question, comment, idea, or suggestion: Select this option if your message refers to something that is not directly impeding the building or teaching of your course. This marks your message as the lowest priority for an immediate response; however, the Canvas support team is generally very prompt to reply to even the lowest priority messages.

I need some help, but it is not urgent: Select this option if you are having a problem with Canvas, but it is not directly impeding the building or teaching of your course. This marks your message as the second lowest priority for an immediate response.

Something is broken, but I can work around it for now: Select this option if the problem you are encountering needs to be solved in the future but is not immediately preventing you from building or teaching your course. This marks your message as the middle priority for an immediate response.

I cannot get things done until I hear back from you: Select this option if the problem you are encountering is directly impeding you from building or teaching your course. This marks your message as the second highest priority for an immediate response.

EXTREME CRITICAL EMERGENCY!: Select this option if the problem you are encountering is directly impeding you from building or teaching your course and it is having a significant impact on the success of the participants in your course. This marks your message as the highest priority for an immediate response and should be used only in extreme cases.

7. After you have filled in the **Subject** and **Description** fields and selected a priority from the **How is this affecting you?** drop-down menu, click on the **Submit Ticket** button at the bottom of the pop-up window.
8. Again, if you would like to create and link to a screencast or screenshot using TechSmith Capture to include in your description of the problem, please refer to the following section of this chapter before submitting your ticket.
9. Once you have submitted your help ticket, you will receive a confirmation email that it has been received and a member of the support team will follow up with you personally to help you resolve the problem.

Next, let's take a look at how to use TechSmith Capture (formerly called Jing) to create a screencast for reporting a problem to Canvas.

Creating a screencast using TechSmith Capture

As mentioned in the preceding section, you can record a screencast or a screenshot using TechSmith Capture, which was formerly called **Jing** and still appears linked in Canvas by this name. **TechSmith Capture** is a program that you can download for free and allows you to record a video of your computer screen that shows exactly what your screen looks like when you encounter the problem you are reporting. Please note that the following installation and usage procedures are described based on use with a Mac and might be slightly different for PC users. Note that the screenshots in this section are taken from a Mac computer.

> **Note**
>
> There are a number of screencast and screenshot programs available for free and for purchase online. This section only discusses TechSmith Capture as the Canvas-recommended software, but you are free to use other programs to record and attach your screencasts or screenshots.

To download TechSmith Capture and create a screencast or screenshot to include in your help ticket, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the link to **Jing** that is included in the **Report a Problem** pop-up window under the **Description** section, as shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 7.18 – Link to Jing in the Report a Problem window

2. Make sure that you leave the **Report a Problem** pop-up window open in your browser, as you will return to the window at the end of this process to paste the link to your screencast in the description of your problem. At this point, open a new tab or window of Canvas in your browser so that you can recreate the problem you are encountering when you record your screencast. Once you have opened the new window of Canvas, return to the **Report a Problem** pop-up and click on the link to Jing. You will be taken to this website: `https://www.techsmith.com/download/jing`.
3. On the TechSmith Capture website, click on the **Download** button that corresponds to the operating system you are using, either **Windows Download** or **Mac Download**.
4. Follow the standard installation procedures for your operating system to install TechSmith Capture onto your computer.

5. Once TechSmith Capture is installed, open the program. If you already have a TechSmith Capture account, you will need to sign in, and if you are new to using TechSmith Capture, follow the link that appears to create a free account, as shown in the following screenshot:

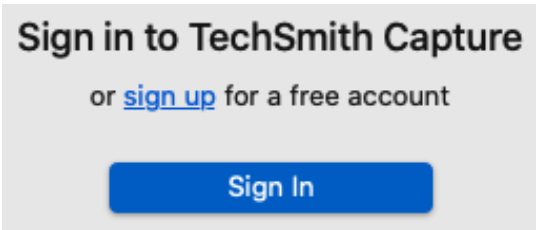


Figure 7.19 – Sign in or sign up for a new TechSmith Capture account

6. Once you have created your account or signed in, return to the TechSmith Capture program on your computer.
7. You will see a request for additional permissions for TechSmith Capture to capture images from your computer. Enable permissions for the requested items to proceed. Examples of requested permissions are provided in the following screenshot:

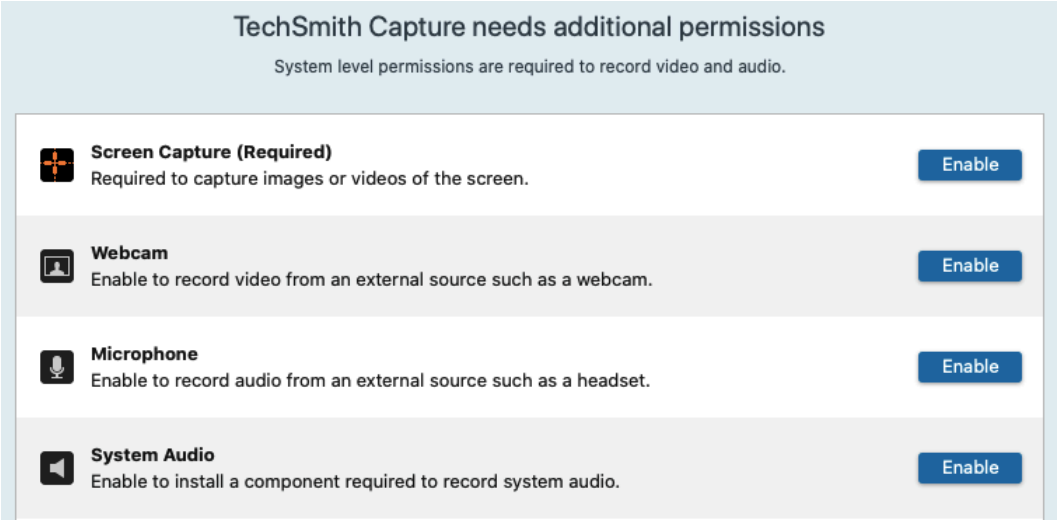


Figure 7.20 – Sample permissions requests

8. When you have enabled the requested permissions, you will see a window showing a red circle that reads **Capture**. To record your screen, click on the **Capture** option, as displayed in the following screenshot:

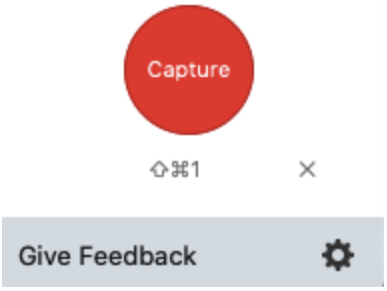


Figure 7.21 – Capture button

When you click on **Capture**, you will be able to select which part of your screen you would like to include in the screen capture. Select the area of your screen that will display your browser window with Canvas and the problem you need to record. You will notice that the outside regions of your screen are grayed out and will not be included in the screen capture.

9. Once you have selected the capture area, you will see a menu appear with four icons that allow you to **Capture an Image**, **Capture a Video**, **Redo Selection**, or **Cancel** your capture, as well as the pixel dimensions of your screen capture, as shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 7.22 – TechSmith Capture screen capture options

10. To record a screencast, select the second icon, **Capture a Video**. The menu at the bottom of your screen capture selection will change, and you will see options to also include a video of yourself using your webcam, to mute or unmute your computer audio, and to include a recording of yourself narrating whatever problem you are recording on Canvas. These options are shown in the following screenshot:

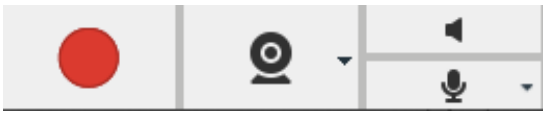


Figure 7.23 – TechSmith Capture video capture menu

11. Once you have selected your desired options, click the red circle icon to begin recording. You will see a large countdown starting at 3, which appears over the section of your screen that will be recorded in the video. When the countdown is finished, your recording will begin automatically.
12. When the recording starts, you will see a menu appear at the bottom of your screen with seven buttons: a **Stop** icon, which you will click when you are done recording, a **Pause** button, a **Toggle Webcam** button to turn your webcam on or off, a **Toggle System Audio** button to stop or start recording your computer's audio, a **Toggle Microphone** button to start or stop recording with your computer's microphone, a **Reset** button, and a **Cancel** button. You will also see the duration of your recording shown in seconds. These options are displayed in the following screenshot:



Figure 7.24 – TechSmith Capture video capture recording menu

13. As you are recording, you can navigate through the problem you are encountering in Canvas. As you click through each step, you can narrate your actions if you have enabled your microphone.
14. When you have finished recording the issue, click on the **Stop** button. A new menu will appear underneath the preview of your recording. Watch your recording to make sure it includes everything you would like. If you are finished, click on the **Upload to Screencast** button, as shown in the bottom-right corner of the following screenshot:

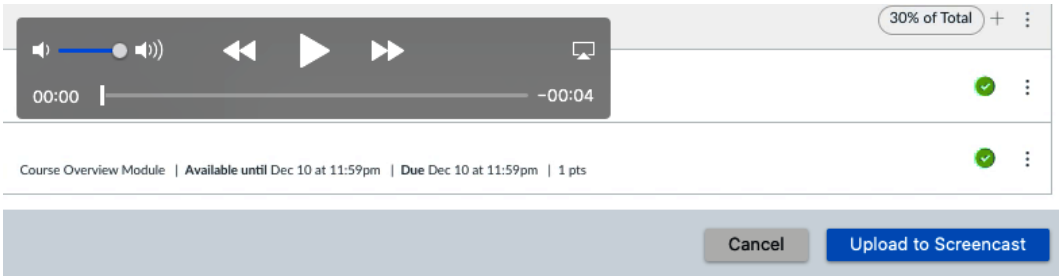


Figure 7.25 – Upload to Screencast button

15. Your video will automatically begin to upload to `http://screencast.com`. A notification window will appear once your upload is complete, and you can follow the link in the window to view your video online. In addition, you can click the **Save As…** button in TechSmith Capture to save your screen capture video to your computer.
16. Once you can see the video in your browser, copy the link to your video from the web address bar.
17. Return to your **Report a Problem** pop-up window in Canvas. Paste the link to your recording in the **Description** of your problem, finish creating your help ticket, as described in the previous section of this chapter, and then click on **Submit Ticket**.

Now that we have covered how to report a problem, let's summarize the remaining other resources on the **Help** menu.

Remaining other resources

On the **Help** menu of Canvas, there are several remaining other resources listed. These options provide specific information or tools to help you with Canvas. The following list provides a brief description of each of the remaining resources listed at the time of writing:

- **Request a Demo for Your School**: If you are using a **Free for Teachers** account and your institution does not currently use Canvas, you can use this option to request a demo and pricing information for your school to potentially adopt Canvas as its **Learning Management System** (**LMS**).
- **Training Services Portal**: This link will take you to the **Training Services** portal, which allows you to complete thorough training videos and course sequences. This is a great option for users who are new to Canvas to get interactive, detailed training on the various features and functionality of Canvas.
- **COVID-19 Canvas Resources**: The Canvas Community has assembled several helpful resources for teachers using Canvas during the COVID-19 pandemic. These resources provide valuable tips and insights that have helped countless teachers during the unprecedented educational conditions during the global pandemic.
- **Show Welcome Tour**: This link opens the Welcome Tour discussed in *Chapter 1*, *Getting Started with Canvas*, which will guide you through the basic layout and features of Canvas.

At this point, we have been through each of the options that are available to you in the **Help** menu should you need help with Canvas at any point. Before moving on and addressing alternative options to obtain help outside of Canvas, let's close this section with a list of important contact information, should you need to get in touch with a Canvas employee to help solve your Canvas problems or answer your Canvas questions:

- **Canvas Phone Numbers**: 1 (800) 203-6755 for general assistance with Canvas
- **Canvas Address**: 6330 South 3000 East, Suite 700, Salt Lake City, UT 84121
- **Canvas Contact Information**: `https://www.instructure.com/contact-us`

Let's now discuss alternative help options from outside of Canvas that you might choose to utilize if the problems or questions you encounter cannot be resolved using the built-in help options.

Finding help outside of Canvas

Should you encounter a problem or question that is not addressed in the built-in help features of Canvas, the best option to consider is contacting your institution's **Information Technology** (**IT**) department. Questions or problems that you might choose to direct to your institution's IT department, rather than Canvas directly, might include issues related to an institution-specific internet server or information that is automatically imported, such as student rosters, course content, calendar events, external applications, or grading tools. There are a number of places where you might find the contact information for your institution's IT department, including the following:

- Your institution's phone or email directory
- Your institution's website
- Fellow faculty or staff members

Related to the last bullet point, you can also reach out to fellow faculty members, staff, or students to ask for help with Canvas. If your institution has recently adopted Canvas as its LMS, chances are that other members of your school community have encountered similar problems or questions and might be able to help you find the answers to your questions.

Summary

In this chapter, we discussed how to find help within Canvas. We discussed how to access the **Help** menu through the **Global Navigation** menu. Then, we worked our way through each item on the **Help** menu. We discussed how to search the **Canvas Guides** for help with features or questions. We learned how to ask the **Community** and browse community forums to see whether other Canvas users have already posed and answered your questions. Next, we walked through how to **Submit a Feature Idea**, how to **Report a Problem** with Canvas, and a discussion of the remaining other resources on the **Help** menu. After reviewing some of the contact information for Canvas that you might find useful in answering your questions, we closed the chapter with a discussion of other places where you may be able to find help outside of the Canvas website.

In our next and final chapter, we will learn how to export your course content for backup and transferring purposes, and we will also explore the ways in which Canvas can connect to trends and requirements of education in the 21st century.

8
Now You're Ready!

As we begin our final chapter, let's take some time to learn how to export your course. We have explored a wide range of topics, focusing on learning what features Canvas offers, how to use those features, and the various options you have to customize your Canvas course. As you finish teaching your course, you will be well served to export your course to keep it as a backup, to upload and reteach it later within Canvas to a new group of students, or to import into another **Learning Management System** (**LMS**).

After covering how to export your course for backup or to import elsewhere, we will tie everything we've learned together through a discussion of how Canvas can help you and your students achieve educational goals while acquiring important 21st century skills. Overall, we will cover the following topics:

- Exporting your course from Canvas to your computer
- Connecting Canvas to education in the 21st century

To begin, we will learn how to export your course content from Canvas.

Technical requirements

To complete this chapter, you will need the following:

- A computer with internet access
- A Canvas account (see *Chapter 1*, *Getting Started with Canvas*)
- A completed Canvas course (see *Chapter 2*, *Building Your Canvas Course*)

Exporting your course

Now that your course is complete, you may want to export the course from Canvas to your computer to save a backup of your work. When you export your course, Canvas compiles all the information from your course and allows you to download a single file to your computer. This file will contain all of the information for your course, and you can use this file as a master template each time you or your colleagues teach the course. While exporting your course is not required, doing so can be helpful for two main reasons:

- It is wise to save a backup version of your course on a computer. After all the hard work you have put into building and teaching your course, it is always a good decision to export your course and save it to a computer. If you are using a **Free for Teachers** account, your course will remain intact and accessible online until you choose to delete it.

  However, if you use Canvas through your institution, each institution has different procedures and policies in place regarding what happens to courses when they are complete. Exporting and saving your course will preserve your hard work and protect it from any accidental or unintended deletion.
- Once you have exported your course, you will be able to import your course into Canvas at any point in the future. You are also able to import your course into other LMSs such as Moodle or Blackboard, though changing LMSs will require thorough proofing of your content once it has been transferred to the new LMS. You might wish to import your course back into Canvas if your course is removed from your institution-specific Canvas account upon completion.

  You will have a copy of the course to import the next time you are scheduled to teach the same course. You might build and teach a course using a **Free for Teachers** account, and then later wish to import that version of the course into an institutional instance of Canvas or another LMS.

Exporting your course does not remove the course from Canvas—your course will still be accessible on the Canvas site unless it is automatically deleted by your institution or if you choose to delete it.

> **Note**
>
> Exporting your course will only export the content of your course, not your students' assignment submissions or grades. Make sure that you download the grades for your course as well as students' individual assignment submissions if you wish to keep that information. To review how to download the grades or assignment submissions for your course, turn back to *Chapter 4*, *Teaching Your Canvas Course*.

To export your entire course, complete the following steps:

1. Click on the **Settings** link at the bottom of the **Course Navigation** menu on the left, as pictured in the following screenshot:

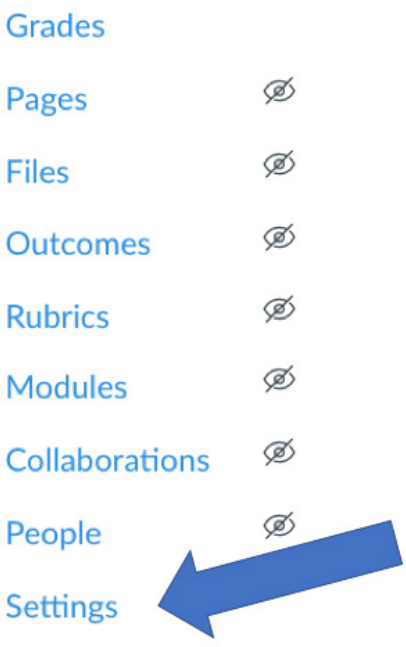


Figure 8.1 – Settings link

2. On the **Settings** page, look at the right Sidebar menu. Click on the **Export Course Content** button, which is highlighted in the following screenshot:

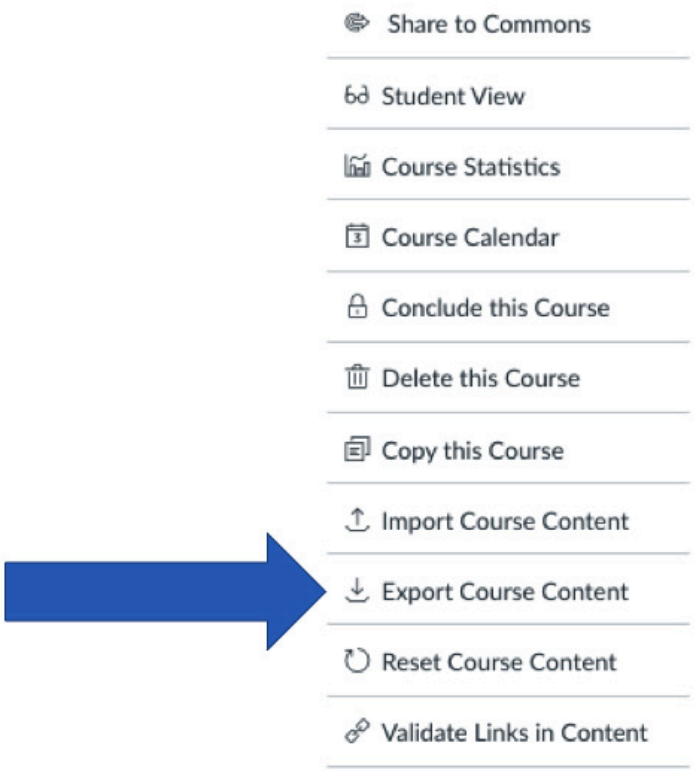


Figure 8.2 – Export Course Content button

3. A screen will appear, asking you whether you would like to export the **Course** or export a **Quiz**. To export your entire course, select the **Course** option, and then click on **Create Export**, as shown in the following screenshot:



Figure 8.3 – Export Type and the Create Export button

4. Once you click on **Create Export**, a progress bar will appear. As indicated in the message below the progress bar, the export might take a while to complete, and you can leave the page while Canvas exports the content. The following screenshot displays this progress bar and message:

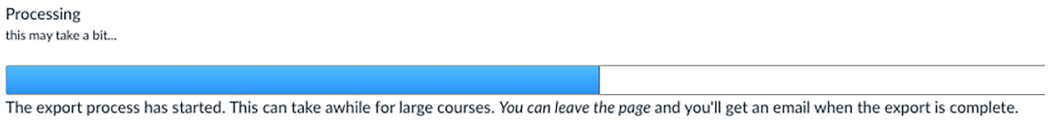


Figure 8.4 – Course Export progress bar

5. When the export is complete, your course export will begin downloading automatically if you have stayed on the **Content Exports** page. You will also receive an email notifying you that your export is complete. If you have navigated away from the **Content Exports** page, you can click on the **Click to view exports** link in the email or navigate back to the **Content Exports** page on Canvas.
6. Below the heading of the **Content Exports** page, you will see your course export listed as a link indicating the time your export was created, as pictured in the following screenshot. Go ahead and click on the link, and the course export file will be downloaded to your computer.

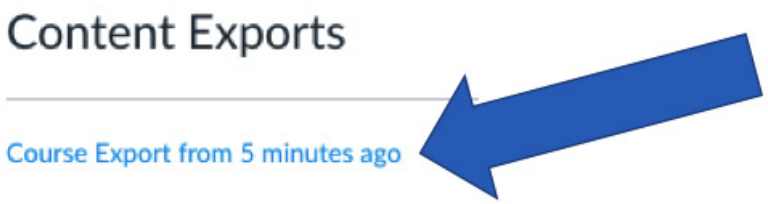


Figure 8.5 – Course Export download link

7. Your course export file will be downloaded to your computer in a single `.imscc` file format. You can then move the downloaded file to a folder on your computer for later access.

Your course export is complete, and you can save the exported file for later use. If you are using an institutional instance of Canvas, you may have other options for importing content from previous versions of your courses, but using an exported `.imscc` file is one easy way to import all of your content into a new course. To access the content stored in the exported `.imscc` file, you will need to import the file back into Canvas or another LMS. To review how to import a course, turn back to *Chapter 1*, *Getting Started with Canvas*.

> **Note**
>
> Your course export will include any announcements you have posted during the duration of your course, so you will most likely want to delete these announcements if you will be importing the course to use in a future class.

You might notice an option to **Conclude this Course** on the course **Settings** page if your institution has not hidden or disabled this option. In most cases, it is not necessary to conclude your course if you have set the correct course start and end dates in **Course Details**. Concluding your course prevents you from altering grades or accessing course content, and you cannot unconclude your course on your own. Some institutions conclude courses automatically, which is why it is a good idea to export your course to preserve your work.

Now that we have covered the last how-to aspects of Canvas, let's conclude by exploring ways to apply the skills we have learned in this book to contemporary educational practices, philosophies, and requirements that you might encounter in your teaching.

Connecting Canvas to education in the 21st century

While learning how to use the features of Canvas, it can be easy to forget the main purpose of Canvas' existence—to better serve your students and yourself in the process of education. In the midst of rapidly evolving technology, students and teachers alike require skills that are as adaptable and fluid as the technologies and new ideas swirling around them. While the development of various technologies might seem daunting, those involved in education in the 21st century have access to new and exciting tools that have never before existed. As an educator seeking to refine your craft, utilizing tools such as Canvas can help you and your students develop the skills that are becoming increasingly necessary to live and thrive in the 21st century.

As the attainment of these skills is indeed proving more and more valuable in recent years, many educational systems have begun to require evidence that instructors are cognizant of these skills and actively working to ensure that students are reaching valuable goals. The final sections of this book will offer some connections and examples of assignments that can help you utilize Canvas to meet the expectations of teaching in the 21st century.

Enacting the Framework for 21st Century Learning

As education across the world continues to evolve, the development of frameworks, methods, and philosophies of teaching has shaped the world of formal education. In recent years, many of these approaches have become integral to education across the world, and one such approach that has gained prominence in the United States' education systems is the Framework for 21st Century Learning, which was developed over the last decade through the work of the **Partnership for 21st Century Skills** (**P21**), a network of Battelle for Kids (`https://www.battelleforkids.org/`).

This partnership between education, business, community, and government leaders was founded to help educators provide children in kindergarten through 12th Grade (K-12) with the skills they will need going forward into the 21st century. Though the focus of P21 is on children in grades K-12, the concepts and knowledge articulated in the Framework for 21st Century Learning are valuable for learners at all levels, including those in higher education.

In the following sections, we will apply our knowledge of Canvas to the desired 21st century student outcomes, as articulated in the P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning to brainstorm the ways in which Canvas can help prepare your students for the future.

> **Note**
>
> In the following sections, all information and quotations regarding the P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning come from the P21 Framework Brief document, which is available at `http://static.battelleforkids.org/documents/p21/P21_Framework_Brief.pdf`.
>
> Feel free to visit `https://www.battelleforkids.org/networks/p21/frameworks-resources` to learn more about the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the valuable contributions they are making to contemporary education. Please note that applications in this book of the P21 Framework do not indicate any endorsement between Canvas and Battelle for Kids and are solely intended for illustrative purposes.

Key subjects and 21st-century themes

The Framework for 21st Century Learning describes the importance of learning certain key subjects including English, Reading, or Language Arts; World Languages; the Arts; Mathematics, Economics; Science; Geography; History; Government; and Civics. In connecting these key subjects to the use of Canvas, the features of Canvas and the tips throughout this book should enable you to successfully teach courses in any of these subjects.

In tandem with teaching and learning within the core subjects, P21 also advocates for schools to *promote an understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving 21st century interdisciplinary themes into core subjects*.

The following examples offer insight and ideas for ways in which Canvas can help you integrate these interdisciplinary themes into your course. As you read through the following suggestions and ideas, think about strategies that you might be able to implement in your existing curriculum to enhance its effectiveness and help your students engage with the P21 skills.

Global awareness

Since Canvas is accessible from anywhere with unrestricted internet access, it opens the opportunity for myriad interactions across the globe. Utilizing Canvas as the platform for a purely online course enables students from around the world to enroll in your course. As a distance-learning tool for students of any age, Canvas has the capacity to unite students from around the world to directly interact with one another.

Some examples of how to foster global awareness using Canvas might include the following:

- You might utilize the **Discussion** feature for students to post a reflection about a class reading that considers their personal cultural background and how that affects their perception of the content. Taking it a step further, you might require students to **Post a reply** comment on other students' reflections to further spark discussion, collaboration, and cross-cultural connections. As a reminder, it is always best to include an overview of online discussion etiquette somewhere within your course—you might consider adding a *Netiquette* section to your syllabus to maintain focus and a professional tone within these discussions.
- You might set up a **Conference** through Canvas with an international colleague as a guest lecturer for a course in any subject. As a prerequisite assignment, you might ask students to prepare three questions to ask the guest lecturer to facilitate a real-time international discussion within your class.

Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy

As the world becomes increasingly digitized, accessing and incorporating current content from the web is a great way to incorporate financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy into your course.

The following example may spark some ideas for a math class:

- In a math course, you might consider creating a **Course module** centered around the stock market. Within the module, you could build custom **Content pages** offering direct instruction and introductions to specific topics. You could upload course readings and embed videos of interviews with experts with the **YouTube** app. You could link to live steam websites of the movement of the markets and create **Quizzes** to assess students' understanding.

Civic literacy

In fostering students' understanding of their role within their communities, Canvas can serve as a conduit of information regarding civic responsibilities, procedures, and actions.

Here is an example of how you might foster civic literacy in your use of Canvas:

- You might create a **Discussion** assignment in which students search the internet for a news article about a current event and post a reflection with connections to other content covered in the course. Offering guidance in your instructions to address how local and national citizenship impacts students' engagement with the event or incident could deepen the nature of responses you receive.
- Since discussion posts are visible to all participants in your course, a follow-up assignment might be for students to read one of the articles posted by another student and critique or respond to their reflection.

Health literacy

Canvas can allow you to facilitate the exploration of health and wellness through the wide array of submission options for assignments. By utilizing the variety of **Assignment types** you can create within Canvas, students are able to explore course content in new and meaningful ways.

Consider the following example for a studio art class:

- In a studio art class, you can create an out-of-class assignment to be submitted to Canvas in which students research the history, nature, and benefits of art therapy online then create and upload a video, sharing their personal relationship with art and connecting it to what they have found in the art therapy stories of others.

Environmental literacy

As a cloud-based LMS, Canvas allows you to share files and course content with your students while maintaining and fostering an awareness of environmental sustainability.

The following example could apply in any subject:

- In any course you teach that involves readings uploaded to Canvas, encourage your students to download the readings to their computers or mobile devices rather than printing the content onto paper. Downloading documents to read on a device instead of printing them saves paper, reduces waste, and helps foster sustainable environmental habits.
- For PDF files embedded into content pages on Canvas, students can click on the **preview** icon that appears next to the document link and read the file directly on the content page without downloading or printing anything. Make a conscious effort to mention or address the environmental impacts of online learning versus traditional classroom settings, perhaps during a synchronous class **Conference** or on a **Discussion** board.

Now that we have discussed the first outcome of the P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning, let's move to the next outcome of the framework, which focuses on learning and innovation skills.

Learning and innovation skills

Several aspects of Canvas can enable students to develop learning and innovation skills to prepare them for the increasingly *complex life and work environments in the 21st century* mentioned in the P21 framework. The communication setup of Canvas allows quick and direct interactions while offering students the opportunity to contemplate and revise their contributions before posting to the course, submitting an assignment, or interacting with other students.

This flexibility, combined with the ways in which you design your assignments, can help incorporate the following elements into your course to ensure the development of learning and innovation skills.

Creativity and innovation

There are many ways in which the features of Canvas can help your students develop their creativity and innovation. As you build your course, finding ways for students to think creatively, work creatively with others, and implement innovations can guide the design of your course activities.

The following ideas may help as you plan and teach your courses using Canvas:

- You might consider assigning **Groups** of students to assemble a **Content page** within Canvas dedicated to a chosen or assigned topic. Do so by creating a content page, and then enable any user within the course to edit the page in the page settings. Allowing students to experiment with the capabilities of the **Rich Content Editor**, embedding outside content, and synthesizing ideas within Canvas can allow each group's creativity to shine.
- As a follow-up assignment, you might choose to have students transfer the content of their content page to a public website or blog using sites such as Wikispaces, Wix, or Weebly. Once their sites are created, students can post their group site to a Canvas **Discussion** page, where other students can view and interact with the work of their peers. Asking students to disseminate the class sites to friends or family around the globe could create international connections stemming from the creativity and innovation of your students' web content.

Critical thinking and problem solving

As your students learn to overcome obstacles and find multiple solutions to complex problems, Canvas offers a place for students to work together to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Consider the following example:

- Assign pairs of students to debate and posit solutions to a global issue that connects to topics within your course. Ask students to use the **Inbox** feature of Canvas to debate the issue privately, finding supporting evidence in various forms from around the internet. Using the **Collaborations** feature, ask each pair of students to assemble and submit a final report on the topic, presenting the various solutions they came up with as well as supporting evidence in various electronic forms such as articles, videos, news clips, and websites.

Communication and collaboration

With the seemingly impersonal nature of electronic communication, communication skills are incredibly important to maintain intended meanings across multiple modes of communication. As the nature of online collaboration and communication poses challenges for understanding, connotation, and meaning, honing communication skills becomes increasingly important.

The following example could work for any subject:

- As a follow-up assignment to the preceding debate suggestion, use the **Conferences** tool in Canvas to set up a full class debate. During the debate, ask each pair of students to present their final report to the class, followed by a group discussion of each pair's findings, solutions, and conclusions. You might find it useful for each pair to explain their process and describe the challenges and/or benefits of collaborating and communicating via the internet in contrast to collaborating and communicating in person.

The third outcome of the Framework for 21st Century Learning that we will discuss next incorporates integral aspects of Canvas as an online LMS.

Information, media, and technology skills

The rapid development of new technologies and the ubiquitous influence of the internet on life in the 21st century have transformed the realm of education. In particular, global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic have forced everyone within education to explore and utilize new technological tools for learning.

Many administrators expect teachers of all levels to stay up to date on the most current technologies and trends that can increase student engagement and achievement. As shown in the following examples, ways to exercise information, media, and technology skills for your students are abundant when using Canvas.

Information literacy

The ease with which anyone in the entire world can post and circulate information on the internet is greater than ever before. As such, students need to be able to judge the quality, accuracy, and validity of the information they encounter.

Here is an example to foster this frame of mind among your students:

- Set up a **Discussion** assignment in which students are required to post an article related to an assigned topic. Before posting the article they find, students must check other students' posts to make sure no one else has posted the same article. Once all of the different articles are posted, require students to pick two articles posted by other students. For each chosen article, ask students to post a critique of the quality, accuracy, and validity of each article and its source.

Media literacy

Information can be confounded as it passes through various forms of media before reaching the general public. Canvas app integrations connect to a variety of media outlets and sources, so integrating apps to compare and contrast information via various forms of media can refine your students' perception as shown in the next example.

- Enable the Wikipedia, New York Times, and USA Today apps for your course. Create an **Assignment**, and then within the description for that assignment, search for and embed articles that present information on the same topic or event from Wikipedia, the New York Times, and USA Today. Following these embedded articles, instruct students to compare and contrast the information from each media outlet and submit a written, video, or audio response sharing their findings.

Information, communications, and technology (ICT) literacy

The mere act of using Canvas immediately begins to hone students' ICT literacy, as using Canvas requires the development and use of basic ICT skills. By using Canvas, students are processing information from a variety of sources, building an understanding of modern communication, and exercising their knowledge of computers and mobile devices to execute complex tasks.

Consider the following example for use in your own teaching practice:

- At the beginning of any course you teach, ask students to pay close attention to all of the steps required to access, configure, and begin using Canvas. Once all of the students are successfully enrolled in your course, ask them to reflect on all of the skills they used to begin using Canvas. You might choose to create a discussion or an assignment where students can submit their reflections, and you can give students the option to submit their reflections in a written, video, or audio format (each of which requires varied and unique ICT skills).

The final outcome of the Framework for 21st Century Learning focuses on broader skills students will use in their everyday lives and careers.

Life and career skills

It seems that in the whirlwind of education, teachers try frantically to cover as much content as possible while other imperative life skills are thrown to the wayside. In working to educate your students, keeping in mind the goal of helping them develop as well-rounded, whole individuals is incredibly important. Not only are life and career skills important for students' individual happiness and well-being, but these skills are also invaluable as your students seek to build relationships, achieve personal goals, and realize a desirable, fulfilling future.

Being aware of the often-impersonal nature of online communication, it is important to consciously integrate life and career skills into the courses you create using Canvas. Fortunately, the array of features within Canvas makes this an attainable goal that can often develop organically as you design and create assignments.

Flexibility and adaptability

As mentioned earlier, students and teachers in the 21st century need skills that are as flexible and adaptable as the ever-changing technology around them. Canvas frequently updates and adds to the current features, so simply using Canvas over an extended period of time can help both students and teachers learn to be flexible and adapt to new situations.

Take note of the following example of a feature within Canvas that can hone these skills:

- Within the time constraints of your course, there are bound to be some necessary adjustments. Using the **Course Calendar** and the **Conversations** tools, communicating changes and adaptations within your course can help students become flexible learners. Explicitly mentioning the value of being able to adapt can help students conceptualize these skills in a more concrete way.
- Canvas also offers some built-in notification features that help students prepare for adjustments, such as the **Notify users that this content has changed** checkbox (pictured in the following screenshot) when editing an assignment or content page. Checking this box makes it easy to let users know when you have updated or altered the expectations for an assignment, which requires flexibility and adaptability on the part of the student:



Figure 8.6 – Checkbox to notify users of adjusted content

Initiative and self-direction

In today's schools and work environment, learning to be a self-guided learner who takes the initiative to gain knowledge and solve problems is an incredibly valuable skill. The expanse of the World Wide Web is at your disposal as an instructor using Canvas, and helping your students realize that that expanse is also open to them can help guide them to take the initiative and direct their own learning.

The following examples show how you might incorporate the skills of initiative and self-direction into your course design:

- Create an **Assignment** that purposely forces your students to take a leap into the unknown. You might choose to introduce a challenging new topic that they have not encountered before, pose a question or problem that requires knowledge not yet covered in the course, or utilize an external tool that requires procedural skills only found elsewhere online. Carefully explain that you expect students to search the web to find the information they need to complete the assignment and that their success with the assignment depends on the quality and content of the resources they find. While education typically follows a scaffolded approach where new knowledge builds on previous knowledge, an occasional foray into the unknown is an excellent exercise to develop students' initiative and self-direction.
- Encourage students to explore the huge array of open online courses at `https://www.canvas.net/`, which hosts Canvas' **Massive Open Online Course** (**MOOC**) options that are free and open for anyone around the world to take. Like other MOOCs available online, the open courses on the Canvas Network allow students to explore topics of interest on their own by enrolling in other online courses free of charge. You may also consider looking into these courses for your own professional and personal development!

Social and cross-cultural skills

Fostering empathy and understanding between your students should serve as the foundation for the beginning of any class you teach. Setting the tone of your course from the very start is incredibly important to help your students learn in a comfortable, safe, and supportive environment.

Teachers in traditional classroom settings often cover these expectations during the first few classes, and you can cover these same ideas within your Canvas course as well using techniques like those explained in the following example:

- Within your course **Syllabus** description, the **Home page** description of your course, or each **Assignment** description, clearly communicate the social and cross-cultural skills you expect to see your students display during the course. Reminding students to consider how others in the class might perceive their comments on **Discussion** boards, during **Conferences**, or within private **Inbox** messages can help develop the skills and frame of mind necessary to flourish in a social environment.

As mentioned previously, consider adding a *Netiquette* section to your syllabus to articulate the positive, productive online communication skills you expect to see students utilize during your course.

Productivity and accountability

Traditional live classes often meet many times a week, and as your students attend each class, they are reminded of the work they are expected to complete for each meeting. Courses within Canvas that do not have a live component force students to manage their time independently as they complete their work outside of a traditional classroom setting. Students are expected to complete and submit their work in a timely fashion without the reminders they receive by attending a live class multiple times a week.

Consider the following idea to help your students maintain their productivity:

- While it is always a good idea to post **Announcements** and send out reminders in **Conversations** a day or two before assignments are due, at the beginning of your course, let students know that as your course progresses, they will be responsible for managing their own productivity and you will hold them accountable for their performance throughout the course.
- Keep in mind the age group with which you are working, and maintain realistic, age-appropriate expectations throughout your course. When students are first learning how to use Canvas and getting used to your expectations within the online learning platform, you might consider some leniency with late submissions, but coupled with feedback communicating your expectations for timely submissions in the future.
- It is important to help your students succeed, but it is valuable to get students on the right track initially and then let them monitor themselves for the rest of your time together. The communication features of Canvas allow you to do this on an individual basis or for the entire group, so take advantage of these features to ensure your students' success.

Leadership and responsibility

When designing your assignments and activities, it is important to find ways for your students to hone their leadership skills and to demonstrate responsibility within Canvas.

Think of ways to explore the individual and community aspects of your course to help students develop these valuable skills, such as those described in the next example:

- Organize participants in your course into user **Groups** or create **Group assignments**. Over the course of multiple group assignments or group activities, ask one student from each group to be the *group leader*. Using the **Inbox** and **Collaborations** features of Canvas, have the groups work together to accomplish the assignment or activity. Set up a **Discussion** board or **Conference** where each group leader presents the work for the entire group.

- Over the duration of your course, make sure that each student in the class serves as the group leader at least once. You might also consider creating a follow-up assignment for the group leader in which each student reflects on the specific challenges and successes they encountered while being the group leader. The directions for the reflection might ask students to discuss how their experience as the group leader contributed to their leadership skills and sense of personal or group responsibility.

The Framework for 21st Century Learning offers a wide array of concepts, skills, and attributes that are valuable for students to attain during the course of their education. The suggested activities in the preceding sections offer just a small sample of ideas that you might be able to implement within your courses to help your students develop these important skills and to empower their success in meeting the demands of the future.

Looking to the future

As you work to help your students excel in the content area of your course and develop useful life skills, consider how modeling behavior in a live classroom can be one of the most powerful tools in a teacher's set of resources. Transfer this idea to teaching with Canvas; as you strive to master the technology of Canvas and as you interact with your students, think about how you are demonstrating and modeling the skills you would like to see in your students.

Consider how your electronic communication reflects on your overall communication skills; do you seem like a different person online than you do in person? How does your leadership style relate to the traits you would like to see develop in your students? Do your assignments reflect the creative and unique nature of the responses you hope to receive from your students?

The list goes on and on, so as you continue to improve your teaching, try to demonstrate the attitudes and behaviors you would want your students to exhibit in class, whether that class is a fully live class, a hybrid live course with online expectations, a fusion class with in-person and remote learners, or a fully online experience.

As technology has developed in recent decades, its impact on education has been tremendous. The options now available to us for how we teach are innumerable, and our ability to target the ways in which students learn has expanded greatly with the development of educational technologies such as Canvas. Without technological tools and resources, the impact of events such as the COVID-19 pandemic would have been far greater on the success of students and the ability of educators to complete our jobs. The ingenuity of educators in overcoming the challenges of teaching through a pandemic is sure to have a lasting impact on how we teach in the future, just as the skills and resiliency students have developed during this time are sure to enhance their success in the future.

At the close of this book, it is important to keep in mind the reason that Canvas exists: education. Everything we have discussed in the last eight chapters should help you in your quest to becoming a better, more effective teacher. Through Canvas, you can help your students engage with course content and help empower them to take ownership of their learning.

It is important to remember that Canvas is an educational tool, and you have the opportunity and responsibility to use it to better the quality of your students' lives. With the skills you have gained, you can now work to create exciting, engaging, and unique learning experiences for you and your students using Canvas.

Summary

In this chapter, we brought our work to a close. We began with the final step-by-step element of this book as we learned how to **Export your course**. Next, we worked to apply the technical knowledge we have gained to practical educational resources that you are likely to encounter as an educator. We covered each of the four 21st century student outcomes as articulated in the P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning in detail, discussing the importance of each outcome and offering concrete examples of ways you might use Canvas to help students achieve these outcomes.

We closed with a look to the future of education and the role technological tools such as Canvas can play in empowering educators and learners in the future.

The final section of this book will provide you with a number of valuable resources and references that you might find helpful in your current and future work with Canvas, online course design, general online learning, and practical applications of educational philosophy.

Appendix: References and Resources

The following sections offer information on materials referenced throughout this book and other resources that you might find helpful as you learn and grow as an online educator. As this book is specifically focused on how to use Canvas as a platform, the references and resources in this appendix provide guidance for topics such as pedagogy, curriculums, policy, and content structure for online learning.

While these topics are certainly referenced throughout this book and informed each chapter, the following resources provide helpful information that is outside of the scope of this book. Though some of these resources may not mention Canvas specifically, they reference broader topics relating to teaching and learning in the 21st century, designing online learning environments, and conceptualizing online education. The description of each resource that follows includes connections to Canvas that you might find helpful as you explore online education through Canvas.

> **Note**
>
> As a reminder, you can always find help with Canvas within the Canvas Guides and Community Forums, as discussed in *Chapter 7*, *Where to Go for Help*. You can find these resources at `http://guides.canvas.com` should you need assistance with Canvas directly.

Teaching and learning in the 21st century

As discussed in *Chapter 8*, *Now You're Ready!*, Canvas offers a wide array of features that allow you to address contemporary trends in education. The resources and books described in the following will provide you with more specific information about current and best practices in teaching and learning.

Battelle for Kids: Partnership for 21st Century Skills

- **Author(s)**: A partnership between educational leaders from the US and non-profit educational organizations.
- **Website**: `http://www.p21.org`.
- **Description**: Battelle for Kids' **Partnership for 21st Century Skills** (**P21**) provides valuable information regarding skills to be gleaned from educational experiences that will enhance the lives of learners in the 21st century. These skills go beyond traditional behaviorist goals to include more complex thought processes by making connections, synthesizing information, and thinking critically. The Framework for 21st Century Learning has been adopted as a contemporary best practice in education around the United States with implications worldwide. The details of the P21 skills and framework are freely available online on the Battelle for Kids' P21 website.
- **Connections to Canvas**: *Chapter 8*, *Now You're Ready!*, includes a detailed discussion of the ways in which Canvas can help you connect to and address a wide variety of 21st century skills in a live, online, or hybrid course. Familiarizing yourself with these skills can inform the ways in which you might choose to utilize Canvas to enhance your students' learning experience.
- **Further reading**: A number of publications address the P21 skills and framework, including *21st Century Skills: Learning for Life in Our Times*.

  Authors: Bernie Trilling and Charles Fadel

  ISBN: 978-1118157060

  Publisher, Year: Jossey-Bass, 2012

Understanding by Design

- **Authors**: Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe
- **ISBN**: 978-0131950849
- **Publisher, Year**: Pearson, 2005 (Expanded Second Edition)
- **Description**: *Understanding by Design* presents ways to conceptualize curriculum design to ensure lasting student understanding. Addressing the contemporary push for standards-based education, components of *Understanding by Design* such as *Backwards Design*, *the Six Facets of Understanding*, *Essential Questions*, and *Teaching for Understanding* offer ways to ensure that your students are able to fully understand and utilize content to meet the educational standards of your country, district, or institution. A number of resources related to *Understanding by Design* are available online for free, in addition to a wide range of publications available for purchase in printed format.
- **Connections to Canvas**: As you work to design your Canvas courses, referring to the concepts and techniques articulated in the *Understanding by Design* literature can help you ensure that your course design, assessments, and outcomes are all aligned with one another to ensure maximum student understanding and retention of information. The **Outcomes** feature of Canvas offers you a unique way to directly incorporate the standards of your country, district, or institution into your course, and incorporating strategies of *Understanding by Design* can further aid you in helping your students attain those outcomes.

Timeless Learning: How Imagination, Observation, and Zero-Based Thinking Change Schools

- **Authors**: Ira Socol, Pam Moran, and Chad Ratliff
- **ISBN**: 978-1119461692
- **Publisher, Year**: Jossey-Bass, 2018
- **Description**: Focused on instructional design to foster impactful and lasting learning for students in the 21st century, this book provides ideas for meaningful activities that will empower students to synthesize and internalize content they encounter in school. Grounded in project-based and student-centered approaches to teaching and learning, the authors provide guidance and examples of successful strategies in the classroom and utilizing technology that has been implemented around the US.

- **Connections to Canvas**: With the powerful tools for collaboration available through Canvas such as the **Collaborations**, **Discussions**, and **Conferences** features, the ideas and strategies provided in this book are extremely useful for educators seeking to bolster the lasting impact their teaching can have on their students. Canvas could serve as an apt medium for implementing the examples of collaborative and interactive activities and approaches for learning provided in this resource.

Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses

- **Authors**: L. Dee Fink
- **ISBN**: 978-1118124253
- **Publisher, Year**: Jossey-Bass, 2013 (Revised and Updated)
- **Description**: Considering the tremendous changes, developments, and advances within higher education in recent decades, this book offers insight into research on learning in higher education as well as research regarding Fink's popular instructional design model used in colleges and universities around the world. This revised edition presents examples of Fink's model from online education, explores how student engagement impacts student learning, and suggests strategies for addressing resistance from students to innovative teaching strategies within higher education.
- **Connections to Canvas**: Though the trend of online learning has begun to spread to institutions serving students of younger ages, online learning started and has remained prominent within higher education. Fink's instructional design model offers guidance for instructors of college-aged learners and integrates current research to support best practices in instructional design. This book can offer context, guidance, and scholarly grounding for you as you work to build and teach your Canvas course within a higher education environment.

Designing online learning environments

In the following, you will find a number of resources that offer specific strategies for designing and developing cooperative, productive, and meaningful online learning communities in which you and your students can engage with one another as well as the content of your course. By comparing the ways in which you might use Canvas to strategies other educators have used, you can expand your understanding of the possibilities of online learning and find unique ways to enhance your Canvas courses.

The Distance Learning Playbook, Grades K-12: Teaching for Engagement and Impact in Any Setting

- **Authors**: Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and John Hattie
- **ISBN**: 978-1071848548
- **Publisher, Year**: Corwin, 2020
- **Description**: As the COVID-19 pandemic uprooted education across the world, teachers entered crisis mode as they worked to finish out the 2019-2020 school year. With the aim of helping teachers plan effective instructional content for the 2020-2021 school year and beyond, the authors of this book sought to provide practical guidance for educators facing unprecedented challenges and adjustments to their practice. With examples on how to adapt elements of education such as daily instruction, assessing student learning, and providing feedback and grading to online and hybrid instructional models, this book is a lifeline for teachers working to thrive in an online learning environment.
- **Connections to Canvas**: Through the lens of helping teachers survive and thrive in an extremely challenging situation, many of the suggestions and advice in this book can be adapted for implementation through the features of Canvas. The communication and feedback features of Canvas, such as the **Inbox** and **Gradebook** features, offer a platform for much of the interpersonal and social-emotional guidance provided in this resource.

The Interactive Class: Using Technology to Make Learning More Relevant and Engaging in the Elementary Classroom

- **Authors**: Joe Merrill and Kristin Merril
- **ISBN**: 978-1733481458
- **Publisher, Year**: Elevate Books EDU, 2020
- **Description**: For teachers at the elementary or primary level, finding age-appropriate and accessible ways to integrate technology into instruction can be a challenge. With circumstances requiring full distance learning, elementary educators have a particular challenge in engaging younger students remotely and designing activities to foster growth and track their progress. This book provides helpful ideas and examples for activities and structures that teachers can implement using technology to foster engagement from younger learners in interactive learning activities.

- **Connections to Canvas**: For younger learners, platforms such as Canvas can provide a helpful place for learners' guardians to access class information and activities to support students' learning and engagement. Many of the ideas and activities provided in this book could be implemented through the features of Canvas for easy access by students' guardians or by upper-elementary-aged learners themselves.

How to Design and Teach A Hybrid Course: Achieving Student-Centered Learning Through Blended Classroom, Online and Experiential Activities

- **Author**: Jay Caulfield
- **ISBN 13**: 978-1579224233
- **Publisher, Year**: Stylus, 2011
- **Description**: Exploring the educational philosophy and theories behind hybrid courses as well as the actual design and implementation of such courses, this book explores the ways in which combining live and online components in a course can impact student achievement and understanding. Hybrid courses allow instructors and students to take advantage of the best aspects of traditional and online learning environments, and this book offers techniques to ensure a meaningful educational experience for all involved.
- **Connections to Canvas**: Hybrid courses have been a topic of discussion throughout *Canvas LMS Course Design*, and many of the chapters have addressed ways in which you might utilize Canvas within a hybrid teaching situation. You can directly implement the concepts covered in *How to Design and Teach a Hybrid Course* into your Canvas course in order to foster collaboration, student-guided learning, and ownership of material through both contemporary and traditional best practices.

Discussion-Based Online Teaching to Enhance Student Learning: Theory, Practice and Assessment

- **Author**: Tisha Bender
- **ISBN 13**: 978-1579227470
- **Publisher, Year**: Stylus, 2012 (2nd Edition)

- **Description**: Discussion-based activities are a powerful means of engaging online learners and creating opportunities for interacting with content in meaningful ways. This book looks into the distinction between digital natives, the generation of students and teachers who have grown up surrounded by technology, and digital immigrants, the generation of teachers and students during whose lifetime current technologies have developed. Included in this resource are myriad ways in which teachers might be able to design online course activities to more effectively encourage cooperation through discussion-based collaboration.
- **Connections to Canvas**: Canvas offers numerous outlets for collaboration and cooperation through discussion-based activities such as the **Discussions**, **Collaborations**, **Conversations**, and **Conferences** features. Applying the philosophical considerations and instructional strategies within this resource to your Canvas course can increase the quality and sophistication of discussion-based elements in your course.

The Gamification of Learning and Instruction: Game-Based Methods and Strategies for Training and Education

- **Author**: Karl M. Kapp
- **ISBN 13**: 978-1118096345
- **Publisher, Year**: Wiley, 2012
- **Description**: This book offers an exciting look into the process of gamification, or reframing learning through the lens of a game. As a means of increasing engagement with content, designing learning experiences as games offers the potential to help students apply and retain the knowledge they gain as they work through information embedded in various game concepts.
- **Connections to Canvas**: The layout options and customizable features of Canvas make it an excellent platform for gamified learning. Within sequential **Modules** that only unlock once students complete certain activities and customizable **Content Pages**, you can build custom content pages full of embedded content and incorporate them in outside resources that could function as levels or worlds of a game. As we have focused so much on the importance of sequence, structure, and scaffolding in choosing your course design, considering a gamified version of your course could offer your students unique and lasting interactions with the content of your course.

- **Further reading**: As a follow up to this successful overview of gamifying education, the author collaborated with others to publish *The Gamification of Learning and Instruction Fieldbook: Ideas into Practice*.

  Authors: Karl M. Kapp, Lucas Blair, and Rich Mesch

  ISBN: 978-1118674437

  Publisher, Year: Wiley, 2013

Conceptualizing online education

As we move into the future, advancements in education, technology, and culture pose challenges regarding relevancy and equity for teachers and learners. We struggle with determining what information is the most valuable for the coming generations to know and finding the best methods of exploring that information with those generations in ways each student can access. Online and distance learning are relatively new concepts in the world of education, and finding a balance between traditional approaches and contemporary practices can be challenging.

Many educators, authors, and policymakers have worked to address these challenges for teachers by illuminating the immense opportunities available through new technologies, philosophies, and strategies. Finding ways to conceptualize online learning within the historical context of education and the advancements of the modern era is vital to ensuring a relevant, meaningful education for our students. The following resources offer excellent ways to understand, frame, and reframe online learning within the context of traditional and contemporary education.

Closing the Gap: Digital Equity Strategies for the K-12 Classroom

- **Authors**: Sarah Thomas, Nicol R. Howard, and Regina Schaffer
- **ISBN**: 978-1564847171
- **Publisher, Year**: International Society for Technology in Education, 2019
- **Description**: As technology becomes more and more essential to student engagement and the delivery of instruction, it is important for all educators to consider barriers or hurdles that may prevent students from being able to interact fully with digital content and through digital means. This book provides insight from various educational stakeholders and examines concerns around equity for all students with regard to resources, access, and connectivity for digital learning.

- **Connections to Canvas**: With both **institutional** and **Free for Teachers** instances of Canvas available, Canvas is a learning management system that is available to a wide array of users with various levels of access, support, and resources. Considering how our students access and engage with digital content is essential to our efficacy as teachers, and this book provides practical strategies for addressing and overcoming challenges teachers and students may face, many of which may be possible to implement through Canvas.

Balance with Blended Learning: Partner with Your Students to Reimagine Learning and Reclaim Your Life

- **Authors**: Catlin R. Tucker
- **ISBN**: 978-1544389523
- **Publisher, Year**: Corwin, 2020
- **Description**: Demands on educators seem to be ever-increasing; finding sustainable ways to manage a teacher's workload can be a significant challenge for educators at any level. This book provides ideas and examples for teachers to harness technology to empower students to be self-guided in their educational journey. Featuring vignettes from various teachers and templates to foster student engagement, track student progress, and provide effective feedback without becoming overwhelmed, this book serves to help teachers balance their professional responsibilities while avoiding burnout.
- **Connections to Canvas**: Many of the strategies and ideas provided in this book could be facilitated through the robust features of Canvas. Managing student feedback and assessment data through the **Gradebook** and the interactive possibilities of **Course Modules**, **Collaborations**, and **Content Pages** make Canvas an apt platform for many of the suggestions provided in this resource.

Essentials of Online Course Design: A Standards-Based Guide (Second Edition)

- **Authors**: Marjorie Val and Kristen Sosulski
- **ISBN**: 978-1138780163
- **Publisher, Year**: Routledge, 2015
- **Website**: `http://essentialsofonlinecoursedesign.com/`

- **Description**: Presenting a methodical, standards-based approach for designing and building online courses, the 2nd edition of this book provides updated insight into the pedagogical, organizational, and visual elements of course design that will ensure ease of use for both instructors and teachers. To help users avoid confusion and disengagement with content, following the steps in this guide will help instructors design courses that present information clearly and logically to promote maximum engagement and achievement.
- **Connections to Canvas**: Making sure your students feel comfortable and at ease with their online learning experience is key in helping them understand the content and obtain desired outcomes. With the flexibility and customizations inherent in Canvas as an LMS, you are able to present only the most pertinent, valuable information and features, while hiding unnecessary or confusing tools. You are able to control the left **Course Navigation menu** items that students see, and you can choose from a wide range of **Home Page layout** designs that make it clear and simple for your students to participate in the course. The ideas within *Essentials of Online Course Design* can help you on your journey to creating an intuitive, clear, concise, and robust online learning experience.

Best Practices for Teaching with Emerging Technologies (2nd Edition)

- **Author**: Michelle Pacansky-Brock
- **ISBN**: 978-1138643659
- **Publisher, Year**: Routledge, 2017 (2nd edition)
- **Description**: With the vast array of social media and internet resources at the disposal of educators utilizing online technologies, finding ways to integrate web-based tools into educational settings while maintaining student privacy is an important goal for contemporary educators. Exploring social media, web-based tools, and mobile device options, this book presents valuable tools at a variety of prices for educators teaching in live, hybrid, or online settings.
- **Connections to Canvas**: Connecting your Canvas account to your social media accounts, integrating apps and external services into your Canvas course, and utilizing the Canvas mobile app are just some of the ways you can connect to the students in your Canvas course. Considering the ideas and concepts included in *Best Practices for Teaching with Emerging Technologies* can further your understanding of ways in which you might connect with your students and help them integrate participation in your course into their digital lives.

The Complete 15-Volume Jossey-Bass Online Teaching & Learning Library

- **Authors**: Various
- **ISBN**: 978-1119139539
- **Publisher, Year**: Jossey-Bass, 2015
- **Website**: `https://isbnsearch.org/isbn/9781119139539`
- **Description**: The **Online Teaching and Learning** (**OTL**) series from Jossey-Bass covers a tremendous range of topics regarding online learning experiences. Books in this series include step-by-step guides as well as explorations of topics including student engagement, assessment, collaboration, and inclusion. The preceding website includes a variety of resources, both print and online, as well as a list of books within the series.
- **Connections to Canvas**: Any of the 15 volumes in the OTL series would prove valuable additions to your collection of resources and each connects to topics directly covered in our exploration of Canvas as a platform for online course content.

Other online course design resources

In addition to the resources listed already, there are many more resources available online dealing with designing online courses, ensuring the high quality of online learning opportunities, and utilizing best practices. The following list includes further resources that you may find helpful, but feel free to explore the web for your own resources as you work to improve your approach to online education.

Course Design Academy

- **Prepared by**: Online Network of Educators
- **Website**: `https://onlinenetworkofeducators.org/course-design-academy/`

The Blended Learning Toolkit

- **Prepared by**: University of Central Florida (UCF) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)
- **Website**: `https://blended.online.ucf.edu/`

Distance Learning: A Gently Curated Collection of Resources for Teachers

- **Prepared by**: Jennifer Gonzalez, Cult of Pedagogy
- **Website**: https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/distance-learning/

Online Course Development Resources

- **Prepared by**: Vanderbilt University
- **Website**: https://www.vanderbilt.edu/cdr/

The 5 Pillars – Sloan-C Quality Framework

- **Prepared by**: Online Learning Consortium
- **Website**: https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/about/quality-framework-five-pillars/

Quality Matters: A National Benchmark for Online Course Design

- **Prepared by**: MarylandOnline
- **Website**: https://www.qualitymatters.org/

Teaching Online: Design of an Online Course

- **Prepared by**: The University of Central Florida
- **Website**: https://cdl.ucf.edu/teach/

CanvasLMS YouTube Channel

- Prepared by Instructure Canvas, YouTube
- **Website**: http://www.youtube.com/user/CanvasLMS



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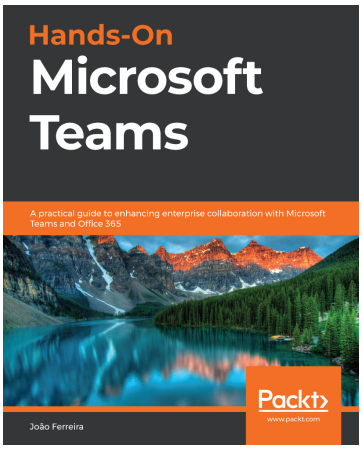
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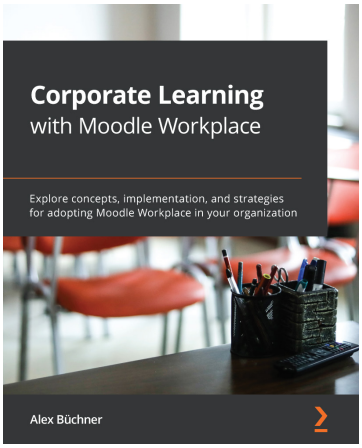


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João Carlos Oliveira Ferreira

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- Configure and manage apps in Teams
- Design automated scripts for managing a Teams environment using PowerShell
- Build your own Microsoft Teams app without writing code



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Alex Büchner

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