

# BUILDING ON A BLANK CANVAS

20 tips for a successful CANVAS course site

## About Canvas Support for LSA Faculty and Staff

This quick-start guide covers 20 basic steps for building your Canvas site and is produced by LSA Instructional Support Services' Learning Technologies and Consulting Group (ISS-LTC) for many of the most asked about features in Canvas. For a more extensive knowledge base, visit <https://umich.instructure.com/courses/200>. LSA faculty and staff can also contact ISS-LTC to meet with an instructional consultant: [lsa-iss-canvas@umich.edu](mailto:lsa-iss-canvas@umich.edu). Visit <https://lsa.umich.edu/iss/resources/canvas.html> for downloads of updated versions of this and other documents.

## Navigation & Personal Preferences

### 1 Use The Canvas Dashboard

*View information across all courses*

- Global Navigation Menu links provide access to your courses and groups as well as grades and for all courses, a Calendar, and an inbox.
- On the left, **Account** provides access to your profile, files, as well as notifications and other types of settings. **Help** displays a list of support options.
- **Clicking the Recent Activity** (image below) slider shows notifications related to activities, such as Announcements or Assignments. **Show More** expands a notification category. **X** deletes a notification. Links go to a related item. Blue dots indicate unread notifications.
- On the right, **To Do** lists work to be completed. **X** removes items and **Coming Up** includes work due in the future.



### 2 Customize Your Course List

*Identify the courses that show in the the Courses List*

- In the Global Navigation links, click **Courses** (changes to **Courses and Groups** if Groups are joined).
- In the popup list, click **All Courses**

- Click the empty star to the left of a course name to make it a favorite. If no courses are starred, all courses are displayed in the **All Courses** popup list and on the **Dashboard**.
- Starred courses are listed on colorful cards, in the **Dashboard**. You can edit them by clicking on the pencil in the top right-hand corner of the card.

### 3 Navigate In Specific Courses

*Move around your course sites*

- Click the Block M to go to the Canvas Dashboard.  

- Click the breadcrumbs (see image above) at the top of the window or the back button in your browser to move back to a previous location.
- Click **Home** in the Course Navigation Menu to go to the course Home Page.

### 4 Manage Your Notification Preferences

*Make choices about when you receive emails for Canvas activities and changes*

These settings affect all courses globally. Students can change their settings as well, enabling them to “turn off” course Announcements.

- Click **Account** (in blue Global Navigation Menu on the left), then click **Settings**.
- In the list on the left, click **Notifications**.
- Scroll to the Notification type you want to change.  

- Hover over the current setting and click a new option.

**Note:** You can always communicate with students, regardless of their notification settings, using MCommunity Course Groups. Additionally, notifications will always show up in Canvas announcements.

## Layout & Structure

### 5 Manage Canvas Files

*Adjust your course file structure*

Files are organized into personal files (My Files), course files, and group files. The left panel shows your courses and folders for quick navigation.

- Click **Account** then click **Files**.
- Navigate the file structure in the left panel by clicking arrows to expand and collapse folders. When you select a course or folder, the items in it are displayed on the right.

▶ LSA Assignments Workshop

- To make a folder, click **+Folder**. Type the name of the folder in the box and press Enter.
- To move files, drag them into folders.
- To view any file, click the linked name.
- To unpublish a file and hide it from student view, click the green cloud.

**Note:** You can work with the files for a single course by choosing **Files** from the Course Navigation Menu.

## 6 Upload Files Into Canvas

*Move course resources into your course so students can access them*

- In Account (in blue Global Navigation Menu on the left), click **Settings**.
- In the left hand navigation menu, click **Files**.
- In the folder list on the left, navigate to the appropriate course and folder and select it.
- Click **Upload**.
- Select a single file or multiple files.
- Click **Open**.

**Note:** You can upload ZIP files to an existing folder in a course.

## 7 Change The Course Navigation Menu

*Adjust the choices that appear in this list to students, as well as their order*

- In the Course Navigation Menu, click **Settings**.
- Click the **Navigation** tab.
- Drag items from the top area to the bottom to hide them from students.
- Drag items from the bottom area to the top to make them visible to students.
- In the top area, drag and drop items to rearrange their order in the Course Navigation Menu.
- Click **Save**.

## 8 Customize The Course Home Page

*Define the layout and content your students see when they log in to your course*

- Click **Home** in the Course Navigation Menu.
- Click **Choose Home Page** on the right.

- Choose the option you want to use as your Home Page. To use the Canvas syllabus, see Create a Canvas Syllabus (12). To use a Canvas page, see Create a Page (13) and Identify a Page as a “Front Page” (14).
- Click **Save**.

## 9 Create A Canvas Syllabus

*If you use Assignments, use this Canvas feature to show your course description and an automatically generated table of your assignments*

The Syllabus Tool is made up of two parts: a description area and a table that automatically includes links to all published events and assignments.

- Click **Syllabus** in the Course Navigation Menu.
- Click **Edit Syllabus Description** on the right.
- Add text, either by typing it or copying it from another source and pasting it in.
- Use the formatting buttons as appropriate, including adding links to an external URL or embedding media. Note that **Tx** clears previous formatting.
- Add links to the information by highlighting a word or putting your cursor on a line and using the tabs on the right to select **Links**, **Files**, or **Images**.
- When you are finished, click **Update Syllabus**.

## Building Content

### 10 Create An Assignment

*Make graded and ungraded activities*

- In the Course Navigation Menu, click **Assignments**.
- Click the **+Assignment** button in the upper right.
- Type a name and description for the assignment.
- Use the formatting buttons as appropriate, including adding links to an external URL or imbedding media. Note that **Tx** clears previous formatting.
- Add links to the information by highlighting a word or putting your cursor on a line and using the tabs on the right to select **Links**, **Files**, or **Images**.
- Make choices as appropriate for **Display Grade as**, **Submission Type** and other options.
- Click **Save** or **Save and Publish**.

### 11 Create A Quiz

*Make graded and ungraded assessments*

- In the Course Navigation Menu, click **Quizzes**.
- Click the **+Quiz** button in the upper right.
- Type a name for the assessment.
- In the Settings tab, type instructions for the quiz and use the formatting buttons as appropriate, including adding links to an external URL or embedding media. Note that **Tx** clears previous formatting.

- Add links to the information by highlighting a word or putting your cursor on a line and using the tabs on the right to select **Links**, **Files**, or **Images**.
- Make choices as appropriate for **Quiz Type** and other options.
- Click the **Questions** tab.
- Click the **New Question** button.
- If appropriate, type a question title.
- Choose the **Question Type** from the dropdown list.
- Type the question text. Use the formatting buttons as appropriate, including adding links to an external URL or embedding media.
- If appropriate, type correct and incorrect answers.
- If appropriate, type comments for correct and incorrect responses.
- Click **Update Question**.
- Click **Save** or **Save and Publish**.

**Note:** You can create question banks by clicking on the gear pulldown next to **+Quiz**. Click **Manage Question Banks**.

## 12 Create A Discussion

*Make graded and ungraded as well as threaded and unthreaded discussions*

- In the Course Navigation Menu, click **Discussions**.
- Click the **+Discussion** button in the upper right.
- Type a title and description for the discussion topic.
- Use the formatting buttons as appropriate, including adding links to an external URL or imbedding media. Note that **Tx** clears previous formatting.
- Add links by highlighting a word or putting your cursor on a line and using the tabs on the right to select **Links**, **Files**, or **Images**.
- Make choices as appropriate for the Discussion options.
- Click **Save** or **Save and Publish**.

## 13 Create A Page

*Create a page to show your course description, link to your syllabus file, and/or display course content and resources*

- In the Course Navigation Menu, click **Pages**.
- Click **View All Pages**.
- Click **+Page** button in upper right.
- Type a title, which becomes the header of your page.
- Add text, either by typing it or copying it from another source and pasting it in.
- Use the formatting buttons as appropriate, including adding links to an external URL or imbedding media. Note that **Tx** clears previous formatting.
- Add links to the information by highlighting a word or putting your cursor on a line and using the tabs on the right to select **Links**, **Files**, or **Images**.

- Click **Save** or **Save and Publish**.

## 14 Identify A Page As A “Front Page”

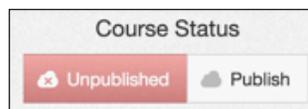
*Identify a Page as the one you want displayed on your Home Page*

- In the Course Navigation Menu, click **Pages**.
- Click **View All Pages**.
- If appropriate, click the gray cloud for the page to publish it.
- Click the gear icon next to the cloud and select **Use as Front Page**.

## Student Interactions & Communications

### 15 Publish Your Course

*Make your course visible to students*



- On the Home page, click **Publish** in the upper right. The button turns green, indicating that your course is now visible in your students' Course List. Any published items (announcements, assignments or quizzes, for example) are now visible to students.

### 16 Manage Course Announcements

*Create new announcements and view past ones*

- In the Course Navigation Menu, click **Announcements**.
- Click **+Announcement**.
- Type the title and the body of the announcement. To add a file, click **Choose File** and navigate to it.
- Optionally, click **Delay Posting** to specify when the announcement is visible to students.

**Note:** You can disable comments on your announcements by going to **Settings** from the Home Page. On the **Course Details** tab, scroll to the bottom and click **More Options**. Click **Disable comments on Announcements**.

### 17 Add A Link To The Course Navigation Menu

*Make a link to a page or external website*

- In the Course Navigation Menu, click **Settings**.
- Click the **Apps** tab.
- Click the **Add App** button.
- Click the icon with a big blue arrow.
- Click **+Add App**.
- Under **Name**, type the text you want to appear in the Course Navigation Menu.
- Under **URL Redirect**, paste the URL of the web page. If it is a Canvas page, edit the page and copy the URL first.

- Click **Show in Course Navigation**.
- Click **Add App**.
- Refresh your browser and the link is displayed.

## 18 Use Student View

*Check your course settings and contents as a student*

- On the Home Page, click **Settings**.
- Click **Student View** in the upper right.
- When you are finished, click **Leave Student View** in the lower right.

## 19 Grade Student Submissions In The Gradebook

*Enter scores on student submissions*

- In the Course Navigation Menu, click **Grades**.
- For courses with combined sections, use the **Showing All Sections** dropdown menu to choose a section to work with.
- To sort students by their score on an assignment, click on the lower left side of an assignment column header. Click the arrow that appears.
- Before grading any submissions in the appropriate assignment column header, click the down arrow on the right and then click **Mute assignment**. This action prevents students from receiving notifications about the grade until you unmute the assignment, at which point ALL students are notified.



- In cells with icons for submitted but ungraded work, click the icon. Some icons are:

 = Text Entry

 = Graded Discussion

- Type a point value.
- Press the **Tab Key** to move to the next assignment for that student or the **Return Key** to move to the next student in that assignment column.
- To add a comment, click the square in the upper right of a cell. Type text in **Add a Comment** and click **Post Comment**.

## 20 Grade Student Submissions With Speedgrader

*Enter annotations, comments, and scores on student submissions*

- In the Course Navigation Menu, click **Grades**.
- In the assignment column header, click on the down arrow in the lower right.
- Click **SpeedGrader**.
- In the gray area at the top of the window on the right, click **Mute Assignment**. This action prevents students from receiving notifications about the grade until you unmute the assignment, at which point ALL students are notified.



- Use the down arrow to pick a student or use the right and left arrows to move to the next student's submission.
- Review the submission.
- If the submission is a file upload, click on **Comments** at the top left to add annotations. Add comment boxes in the margins, text boxes in the body, and use drawing tools as appropriate.
- On the right, type the point value in **Grade**.
- Type your comments in **Add a Comment**.
- Optionally, click either of the attachment icons to add documents or voice/video comments.
- Click **Submit Comment**.
- To return to the Gradebook, click **Gradebook** to the right of the student list.
- To return to the Course Home Page, click **Course Home** to the right of the student list. Under **Name**, type the text you want to appear in the Course Navigation Menu.
- Under **URL Redirect**, paste the URL of the web page. If it is a Canvas page, edit the page and copy the URL first.
- Click **Show in Course Navigation**.
- Click **Add App**.
- Refresh your browser and the link is displayed.

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### LSA ISS Support Options

- Group and 1:1 Consultations  
734-615-0099  
[lsa-iss-canvas@umich.edu](mailto:lsa-iss-canvas@umich.edu)
- Basic and Advanced Workshops  
[ttc.iss.lsa.umich.edu/ttc/sessions](http://ttc.iss.lsa.umich.edu/ttc/sessions)
- Funding available for Graduate Student Assistance to individual LSA faculty and departments

### ITS Support Options

- Canvas at Michigan  
[umich.instructure.com/courses/200](http://umich.instructure.com/courses/200)
- ITS Service Center  
734-764-HELP(4357)  
[4help@umich.edu](mailto:4help@umich.edu)

### Instructure Support Options

- Canvas Guides and Videos  
[community.canvaslms.com/community/answers/guides](http://community.canvaslms.com/community/answers/guides)
- Canvas Live Chat Support (link in Canvas Help)