

BLOGS

A blog—a shorthand term that means web log—is a personal online journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public access and use. Most blogs also have some kind of commenting system, so that people can respond to and interact with one another. Blogs encourage students to clearly express their ideas and addresses the need to expand various aspects of social learning. Moreover, they are an effective means of gaining insight into students' activities and provide a way to share the knowledge and materials collected.

In Blackboard Learn, instructors create and manage blogs, and only enrolled users can view and create entries and comments in them.

BLOG TYPES IN BLACKBOARD LEARN

In Blackboard Learn, blogs consist of two elements:

- **Blog entries:** Text, images, links, multimedia, mashups, and attachments added by course members open for comments.
- **Comments:** Remarks or responses to blog entries made by other course members, including the instructor.

You can choose to allow students to participate in blogs in three ways:

- **Course Blogs:** You can create a course blog and determines the topic to be addressed. All course members can add blog entries and add comments to blog entries.
- **Individual Blogs:** You can create a blog for individual course members to use. However, only you are able to add blog entries. All other course members can view and add comments.
- **Group Blogs:** If you enable the blogs tool for a group of users:
 - Group members can add blog entries and make comments on blog entries, building upon one another.
 - All course members can view group blogs, but non-group members can only add comments.

NOTE: You have full control over all blogs in your course and can edit and delete entries in any of the blog types. You can also delete user comments.

CREATING A BLOG

You can use blog writing assignments as another medium for reflective learning. With this type of assignment, students are expected to display their research, analytical, and communication skills through a series of commentaries meant for public consumption and comment.

In the course environment, only enrolled users can view blogs. Similar to journals, you can use blogs for a graded assignment or gather opinions and information without assigning a grade.

You can create one or more blogs for use by students. You must create blog topics before students can add their entries.

HOW TO CREATE A BLOG TOPIC

1. Change **Edit Mode** to **ON**.
2. On the **Control Panel**, expand the **Course Tools** section and select **Blogs**.
3. On the **Blogs** listing page, click **Create Blog** on the action bar.
4. On the **Create Blog** page, type a **Name** for the blog.
5. Type optional **Instructions** for the blog. Format the text and add images, links, multimedia, mashups, and attachments using the functions in the content editor, if needed. Attachments you add using the content editor can be launched in a new window and have alternate text added to describe the attachment. Any files you upload from your computer are saved in Course Files or the Content Collection in the top-level folder.
6. For **Blog Availability**, select the **Yes** option to make it available to users.
7. For **Blog Date and Time Restrictions**, you can set a blog to display on a specific date and time and to stop displaying on a specific date and time. Select the **Display After** and **Display Until** check boxes to enable the date and time selections. Use the pop-up **Date Selection Calendar** and **Time Selection Menu** to select dates and times or type dates and times in the boxes. Display restrictions do not affect the blog availability, only when it appears.
8. In the **Blog Participation** section, select **Individual to All Students** or **Course**. Optionally, select **Allow Anonymous Comments** for individual blogs or **Allow Anonymous Entries and Comments** for course and group blogs.
9. In the **Blog Settings** section, select **Monthly** or **Weekly Index Entries**.
 - Optionally, select the check box to **Allow Users to Edit and Delete Entries**.
 - Optionally, select the check box to **Allow Users to Delete Comments**.
10. In the **Grade Settings** section, select **No grading** or the **Grade** option and type the number of **Points possible**. Points possible will apply to one or more entries made by the user to the blog topic. After you enable grading, a column is created automatically in the Grade Center. It is permanently gradable, and you cannot change the setting to **No grading**.
11. Optionally, select the check box for **Show participants in needs grading status** and from the drop-down list, select the number of entries required. Applying this setting will show the needs

grading icon in the Grade Center and place the entries in the queue on the **Needs Grading** page after the specified number of entries are made.

Grade Settings

Grade Blog

No grading

Grade : Points possible : 25

Show participants in "needs grading" status after every 3 Entries

Associated Rubrics

Add Rubric

Name	Type	Date Last Edited

12. Optionally, associate a rubric by pointing to **Add Rubric** to access the drop-down list.

13. Click **Submit**.

The blog topics appear in alphabetical order on the **Blogs** listing page. You can sort columns by clicking the column title or caret.

You can also provide links to blogs in course areas such as content areas, learning modules, lesson plans, and folders.

HOW TO CREATE BLOG ENTRIES

You and your students create blog entries and other course members can make comments on the entries. As the instructor, you can use blog entries to provide structure for discussions on class topics and other issues.

On the **Blogs** listing page, following each blog title, students can see if the blog belongs to a group, the course, or to individual students. All course members can read group blogs, but to make an entry, a user must be a group member.

1. On the **Blogs** listing page, select a blog title.
2. On the blog's topic page, click **Create Blog Entry** on the action bar.
3. On the **Create Blog Entry** page, type a **Title** for the blog entry.
4. Type text in the **Entry Message** box. Optionally, format the text and add images, links, multimedia, mashups, and attachments using the functions in the content editor. Attachments you add using the content editor can be launched in a new window and have alternate text added to describe the attachment.
5. If enabled and appropriate, select the check box for **Post Entry as Anonymous**.
6. In the **Blog Entry Files** section, browse for a file to attach to the blog entry.
7. Click **Post Entry** to submit the blog entry or click **Save Entry as Draft** to add the entry later.

VIEWING DRAFTS

To view or add to saved drafts, click View Drafts on the action bar on the **Blogs** listing page.

HOW TO COMMENT ON A BLOG ENTRY

Because blogs are meant to be read by others, students can comment on one another's blog entries, whether they belong to an individual, the course, or a group.

You determine if comments can be made anonymously or deleted. You can delete any user's comment by clicking the **X**. After they are posted, users cannot edit their comments.

1. On the **Blogs** listing page, select a blog title.
2. On the blog's topic page, select a blog to view by selecting the user's name in the side panel in the **View Entries by** section. The user's blog entries open in the content frame.
3. Click **Comment** following the user's entry. The **Comment** box appears.
4. Type a comment in the **Comment** box.
5. Click spell check at the bottom of the **Comment** box to check the spelling of the content before continuing.
6. If enabled and appropriate, select the check box for **Comment on Entry as Anonymous**.
7. Click **Add**. Click the **Comments** link below the entry to view the comment.

EDITING AND MANAGING BLOGS

You can edit basic properties of a blog topic, including the name, instructions, availability, and other custom settings. After a blog topic is designated for individuals or the course, you cannot change it to the other.

You can edit any user's blog entries and can delete blog topics. You can also delete comments, but cannot edit them.

HOW TO EDIT A BLOG

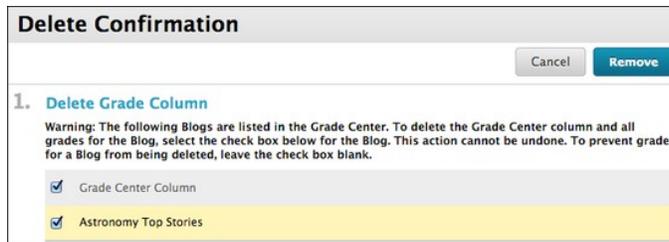
1. Change Edit Mode to ON.
2. On the Blogs listing page, access a blog's contextual menu.
3. Select Edit.
4. On the Edit Blog page, make changes.
5. Click Submit.

HOW TO DELETE A BLOG

If you no longer need a blog, you can delete it. Deleting a blog is permanent. On the Blogs listing page, select Delete from the blog's contextual menu.

Note: If a blog is gradable, the Delete Confirmation page appears. You need to perform extra steps to remove a gradable blog.

1. Change Edit Mode to ON.
2. On the Blogs listing page, access a blog's contextual menu.
3. Select Delete.
4. Click OK in the warning pop-up. The Delete Confirmation page appears. You have two options:
 - Do not select check boxes: The blog is deleted, but the Grade Center column and scores you have assigned are retained. For example, all student entries are graded and you want to keep the Grade Center column for the final grade calculations. If you delete a blog, yet retain the Grade Center column, you can delete that column from the Grade Center at any time.
 - Select the check boxes: The grade column in the Grade Center and the blog are deleted. For example, if you do not want to include the grade column for the blog entries in the final grade, you can safely delete all.



5. Click Remove to complete the deletion.

HOW TO CHANGE THE AVAILABILITY OF A BLOG

1. Change Edit Mode to ON.
2. On the Blogs listing page, select the check box next to the appropriate blog.
3. Point to Availability on the action bar to access the drop-down list.
4. Select Make Available or Make Unavailable.

HOW TO ADD A BLOG LINK TO THE COURSE MENU

If you want students to access the blogs tool often, you can add a link to the course menu for one-click access to the tool. You can customize the name of the link as needed.

1. Change Edit Mode to ON and point to the plus sign above the course menu. The Add Menu Item drop-down list appears.
2. Select Tool Link.
3. Type a Name for the link.
4. From the Type drop-down list, select Blogs.
5. Select the Available to Users check box.
6. Click Submit.

TROUBLESHOOTING BLOG MANAGEMENT

If	Then
You delete a blog while users are posting	The blog and all comments are deleted.
You make a blog unavailable while users are posting	The blog remains visible to you in Edit Mode, but does not appear to users.
You change the Allow Users to Edit and	Entries remain, but users cannot edit them.

If	Then
Delete Entries setting	
You change the Allow Users to Delete Comments setting	Comments remain, but users cannot delete them.
You enable blog grading	You cannot change this setting. Delete the blog and the Grade Center column to remove it. If you need the blog entries, but not the grades, you can decide to not include the Grade Center column for the blog in Grade Center calculations.

GRADING BLOGS

You can grade participation in blogs for individuals and groups. You can grade the quality of the discussion, as well as the number of entries and comments that are made by an individual or a course group.

When you enable grading, a column is created automatically in the Grade Center. You grade students' blog entries from the blog topic page. All of an individual student's entries—and comments made by others—appear as you determine the grade. The grades show immediately in the Grade Center.

You access the blog topic page in the following ways:

- In the blogs tool, access a blog and select a user from the **All Course Members** drop-down list.
- On the **Needs Grading** page, access a blog's contextual menu and click **Grade All Users**.
- In the Grade Center, locate the column for the blog you want to grade. Move the mouse pointer over a cell containing the needs grading icon—the exclamation mark—to access the blog's contextual menu. Click **Grade User Activity**.

You can decide whether or not students can view their grades and feedback in **My Grades** by editing the column information in the Grade Center.

When you edit an assigned grade from the blog topic page, the Grade Center is updated.

CHANGE A TOPIC FROM GRADED TO UNGRADED

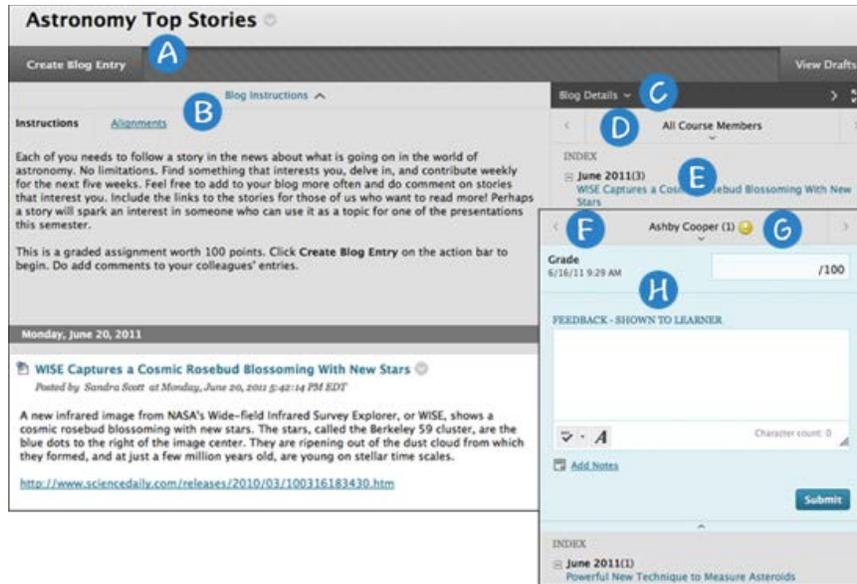
You cannot change a graded blog topic to ungraded. You need to delete the graded blog topic from the **Blogs** listing page and the Grade Center and create a new ungraded topic.

Alternatively, to retain entries, set the blog's Grade Center column to not be included in calculations. In essence, the blog continues to be considered graded by the Grade Center, but any results or grades assigned are ignored.

THE BLOG TOPIC PAGE

The blog topic page is divided into two main sections. You can view the entries in the content frame. In the sidebar, you can view information about the blog topic or entry, expand the **Index**, grade the blog entry if the blog is gradable, and select an individual user's name to view his or her entries alone in the content frame.

NOTE: If you do not see the grading feature in the sidebar, your school has not turned this feature on.



- A. On the action bar, click **Create Blog Entry** to add your thoughts.
- B. Below the action bar, the **Blog Instructions** are expanded by default. You can minimize them. Click **Alignments** to add alignments.
- C. In the sidebar, you can expand the **Blog Details** section to display information about the current selection, including the author and number of entries and comments. Click the right-pointing arrow to collapse the sidebar for more viewing room for entries. Click the four arrows to view the blog entries and sidebar in full screen.
- D. For **All Course Members**, click the down-pointing arrow to view a list and select a member. The selected member's entries appear in the content frame. Optionally, click **Show members without entries**.
- E. The **Index** section displays the titles of the entries created during the selected time period. Click the minus sign to collapse the title list.
- F. Use the left- and right-pointing arrows to navigate to the previous or next student.
- G. For graded blogs, icons designate the status of a user's activity. The needs grading icon—the exclamation mark—indicates that a user has met the minimum activity for grading you set for the blog. The in progress icon appears when a user has some activity, but has not yet met the minimum number required to trigger needs grading status.
- H. In the grading sidebar, provide a grade and feedback for a student.

HOW TO GRADE BLOG ENTRIES FOR INDIVIDUALS

You can begin the grading process for blogs from the Grade Center, the **Needs Grading** page, and the **Course Tools** section in the **Control Panel**.

While specifying blog settings, if you did NOT select the **Show participants in "needs grading" status** box and select a minimum number of entries, the needs grading icon will not appear in the Grade Center, on the blog topic page, and items do not appear on the **Needs Grading** page.

The in progress icon shows in the Grade Center cell and in a blog:

- For student activity that does not meet the minimum number you set.
- If you did not select the **Show participants in "needs grading" status** check box.

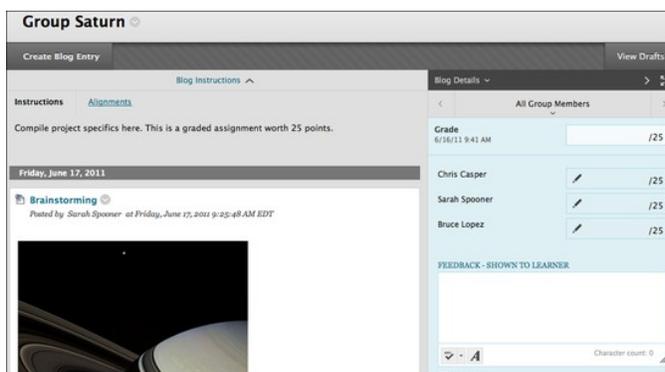
Use the following steps to grade blog entries:

1. Access the blog topic page and select the blog entry or entries to grade. The user's blog entry or entries open in the content frame.
2. Type a point total in the **Grade** box. If you associated a rubric for this graded blog, expand and complete the rubric. To edit an existing grade, click in the **Grade** box and change the grade.
3. Optionally, type **Feedback** for the student. In the **Add Notes** section, make notes that appear only to you and the grader role. You can also use the spell check function in the bottom of each text box. The icon for **Click to open full content editor** gives you access to all the content editor functions.
4. Click **Submit** to add the grade, feedback, and grading notes to the Grade Center.

GROUP BLOG GRADING

On the blog topic page, you can read all the entries for a group blog and add one grade. Users with entries that need grading are indicated with the needs grading icon—the exclamation mark—in the Grade Center and on the blog topic page in the **All Group Members** drop-down list. In addition, the group blog is listed on the **Needs Grading** page.

On the group blog page, the grading sidebar appears, listing all group members.



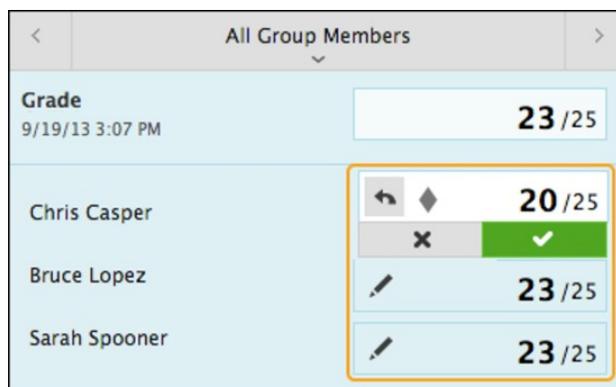
When you add a grade for a group blog, the grade is automatically given to all members of the group and is populated in the corresponding column in the Grade Center for each group member.

All members are assigned a grade, regardless if a member did not contribute, although you can change this grade. Students can view their group blog grades in **My Grades** and in the group blog by selecting their names in the **All Group Members** drop-down list.

CHANGE AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER'S GROUP GRADE

You can assign an individual group member a different grade than the group by editing the member's grade. If you change a group member's grade and assign a new group grade, the new group grade will not affect the individual's new grade. Individual members only see one grade, not what each member earned. The individual's new grade will not appear to the other group members.

In the grading sidebar, click the pencil icon to change the group grade for a member. Type a new grade and click the check mark icon to save it. This grade becomes an override grade.



The group grade and the individual group member's edited grade also appear in the Grade Center. Grayed out cells appear in the group blog column for course members who are not part of the group.

REVERT A MEMBER'S EDITED GRADE

You can revert a member's edited grade to the original group grade, which all group members received.

In the grading sidebar, click the pencil icon for the user with the edited grade. Click the left-pointing arrow to change the grade to the original group grade. The override icon is removed. The change also appears in the Grade Center.