



Templates for Online Course Sites

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These online templates provide *suggested* structure and appearance for online course materials. Use some or all of the components within any given template. Before commencing work on your course website, be sure to check with your colleagues to see if standards have already been determined for your program or department.

Template A (Blank) is the basic Blackboard shell, with default navigation controls and content areas. It's what you get when you request a new course site. *[View a diagram of its components.](#)*

Use **Template B (Skeleton)** if you want a skeleton structure of weekly folders, but wish to design and create your own materials to put in them. It consists of Template A plus weekly folders under the "Assignments" button. *[View a diagram of the folder structure.](#)*

Template C (Sample) provides guidance and examples to help you decide what to include in your course site. It augments the structure in Template B with:

- Content areas structured by weeks or units, with sample documents for things like objectives, readings, activities, etc. that you can edit.
- Discussion forums to match the structure of the content areas.
- Coordinated selections of button colors, links, and headings.
- Sample banner graphic that will need to be modified/replaced with one specific to your course (you can create your own or [request one from TTSG](#)).

[View a diagram of folder structure and contents.](#)

Create Your Own Template: Create a customized template for a department or program by developing a course site to roughly the level of detail in Templates A or B (perhaps even including sample generic documents like syllabi, lab procedures, etc.), then **Export Course** via the control panel to create a ZIP file that can be applied as described below (Get Templates). Post the ZIP file to a web server accessible to all course developers in the department or program.

Get Templates

You may wish to **preview** the standard templates by visiting them as a guest (not all functions will be accessible to guests). To do so, log in to campus.fsu.edu and click the Courses tab, then search for "template_" (don't forget to include the underscore character). **Contact us** if you'd like to be enrolled in a template site for a closer look.

To apply a template:

If you have **requested a new course site**, it will look like Template A by default. To import the folders and structure of Template B into your course site, read the following steps completely *before* you begin:

1. Download **this ZIP file** containing an archive of the template contents.
2. Log in to your course site and go to *Control Panel > Course Options > Import Package*.
3. On the *Import Package* page, browse and locate the ZIP file from step 1.
4. On the same page, be sure to select the *Content, Course Settings, and Discussion Board* content areas (the others are not part of the template).
5. Click Submit.
6. Once the template has been imported, check the structure and content of your site for overlap or duplication. This is especially important if you have imported into an existing course site that you have already added materials to.

We do not recommend copying Template C into your course site, due to the large number of documents and other materials it contains (most/all of which would need to be replaced anyway). It mainly serves as an example or model of Template B, with content filled in.

Advanced, External Site Templates

More sophisticated templates can be developed in conjunction with course materials stored outside Blackboard -- a method that is also conducive to efficient document management for large-enrollment courses with multiple sections. **See an illustration of one implementation of this process.**

Using this approach, most or all of the following functions are carried out within the individual Blackboard course site:

- **administration** (announcements, rosters, testing, gradebooks, etc.)
- **communication** (email, chat, discussion forums)

Some or all of the **presentation** components (lectures, documents, videos, hyperlinks, etc.), however, are stored on one or more *external* web servers outside campus.fsu.edu. Students follow a hyperlink from Blackboard to the externally-stored content, and will probably not even notice the difference in storage location.

The advantages include:

- more flexibility in appearance and structure
- employment of traditional website development/maintenance methods
- common course content shared by multiple courses

- access by search engines, colleagues, and potential students
- use of a streaming server to reduce download times for multimedia content

Important: You should store materials *inside* Blackboard if either of the following applies:

- Permission to use copyrighted materials is contingent on them being in a password-protected site.
- You wish to log student access of specific course materials (some external sites can report "hits", but Blackboard will tell you more about specific use by specific students).

If you wish to explore developing advanced external templates, please contact the [Center for Teaching & Learning](#) or your online program coordinator.

Need help developing and managing online content? [Visit the Center for Teaching and Learning](#) to learn about workshops and online help.