

# Managing Your Course Menu

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Your course menu provides the basic navigation that you and your students will use to access your course materials. You can add menu items, rename (“modify”) existing items, remove items, and re-order items by choosing **Manage Course Menu** under **Course Options** in the **Control Panel**.

### To Remove Items from the Menu:

In the **Control Panel**, choose **Manage Course Menu** under **Course Options**. Remove any of the following that you will **not** use. Common examples might be

- Course Documents (avoid ambiguity with Course Information)
- Assignments (If you teach a classroom course and just use Blackboard for general course information)
- Discussion Board (if you don’t plan to include discussions in your course)
- External Links (you can include external links in your learning modules and course information).

### To Reorder Items in the Menu:

In the **Control Panel**, choose **Manage Course Menu** under **Course Options**. Change the numbers in the boxes next to each item to reorder the menu items.

### To Rename Items in the Menu:

In the **Control Panel**, choose **Manage Course Menu** under **Course Options**. Click the **Modify** button next to the item you wish to rename, and type the name that you want. Common examples might be:

- Rename **Assignments** as **Learning Modules** (it makes sense to provide a single menu item that students can use to find ALL learning materials/activities associated with the course. Learning Modules can be more meaningful than Assignments for this purpose.

## To Add Items to the Menu:

In the **Control Panel**, choose **Manage Course Menu** under **Course Options**. Click the **Content Area** button at the top of the page to add a new content area (for example **Assignments, Course Information** or **Course Documents**). Click the **Tool Link** button to add a tool to the menu, such as the **My Grades** tool. Click the **External Link** button to add a link to a Web site to the menu. As a rule, avoid adding a **Course Link** unless you really need to allow students to jump to a deeply nested item in your course.

Here are some useful menu additions you might consider:

- Add a link to **My Grades**; this is a good idea since it allows students to find their grades quickly and easily. Choose **Tool Link** and select **My Grades** from the drop down list of tools
- Add a menu item that links to the A-B Tech Blackboard Help page. Choose **External Link** and use the name **Blackboard Help** and **URL**: <http://www.abtech.edu/vcampus>

## Making Tools Available or Unavailable

In addition to using the menu to provide direct links to content areas and tools in your course, you can also switch the **availability** of course tools on or off. If you make a tool unavailable, it means that students cannot use the tool, whether or not the tool appears in the menu. It's a good idea to make some tools unavailable if you don't plan to use them, to avoid confusion. Here are examples of tools you may not want your students to use:

- **The Digital Drop Box**. This can be used to exchange files but in most cases we use Assignments for this purpose so the presence of the Digital Drop Box can be confusing. Student may submit via the Drop Box and wonder why you did not receive their work.
- **Messages**. This is an internal Blackboard messaging system but in most cases we use email to communicate so the presence of messages is confusing. Students may send message and wonder why you do not respond.
- **Discussion Board**. Even if you remove this from the menu, it will be still be available under Communications unless you make it unavailable.

To make tools unavailable. choose **Manage Tools** under **Course Options** in the **Control Panel**. Now choose **Tool Availability** and switch off the tools as appropriate

Note: if you make a tool unavailable, it makes sense to also remove it from the menu! 😊

## Changing the Appearance of your Menu

In the Control Panel, choose **Course Design**, then **Course Menu Design**. You can display your menu as buttons or text (text provides a neater, more “modern” appearance). You can modify the color and appearance to suit your tastes.

Note that you can also add a course banner if you have an image you would like to appear at the top of your course. Be careful not use too large an image that only serves to push the real content down the page. To add a banner, in the Control Panel, choose **Course Design**, then **Course Banner**.

## Important Considerations when Modifying your Menu

There are a few things to be aware of when you make changes to the menu:

- Avoid making changes to menu names just for the sake of it. Remember that students take other courses too, so it helps them if courses remain relatively consist in appearance.
- Try to keep your menu short and easy to understand.
- Remove tools and content areas that you don't intend to use so that students don't wonder if there is something they are missing. Switch off availability of tools such as Messages, Drop Box and Discussion Board if you're not going to use them.
- Two menu items (**Tools** and **Communication**) provide sub-listings of links to multiple tools. Leave these in the menu (perhaps listed last) unless you have a compelling reason to remove them, some students are used to using these items. You can remove specific tools from these areas by making them Unavailable (see above).
- If you copy a course that includes a modified menu to a new course shell, the modified menu items will be **added to and will not replace** the menu items in the shell. As an example, if you rename **Assignments** to **Learning Modules**, and then copy this course to a course shell, your new course menu will include both **Learning Modules** and **Assignments**. You will therefore need to remove unwanted items from the new course. This can be a little tedious.