Lessons: How to Build a Well-Designed Subpage

Sakai sites for online and hybrid courses should utilize the **Lessons** tool, with a **subpage for each week** of the class. As stated in Durham Tech's [Curriculum Online Course Guidelines](#), weekly subpages should contain clear instructions, due dates, and links to activities and assignments. This will make it easy for students to find everything they need in one place and will provide a consistent experience for students across courses.

This handout reviews how to create Lessons subpages and provides detailed instructions for adding various types of content to your subpages – including text, videos, links to files and websites, and links to assignments, forums, tests and quizzes.

Step 1: Enable the Lessons tool

If the Lessons tool is not already present on your course site menu, here's how to add it:

- Go to **Site Info** > **Edit Tools**, select the **Lessons** tool, click **Continue** (twice), then click **Finish**

Step 2: Create a subpage for each week of the class

If you haven't already, create a subpage in Lessons for each week of your class:

1. In the Lessons area, click the **Add Subpage** button along the top.
2. In the **Add Subpage** dialog box, type a title for your subpage, such as: *Week 3.*
3. Click **Create**. You are now on the weekly subpage you just created. The subpage is currently blank. (Help information is displayed; it will disappear once you add some content.)

IMPORTANT: Before creating another weekly subpage, you must **return to the main Lessons page** (which lists all weekly subpages), by clicking **Lessons** in the breadcrumb trail along the top. Once you're back on the main page, you can follow the steps above to add another weekly subpage.
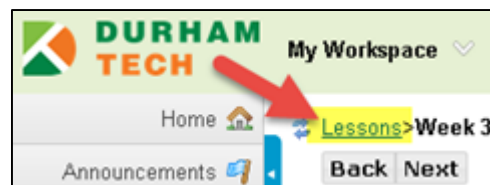
## Step 3: Add a heading and due date to your weekly subpage

Now let's start adding content to one of your weekly subpages. We will start by adding a heading to let students know where they are and what is due when.

1. Before you begin, make sure you are ON one of your "blank" weekly subpages (where Help info is displayed). The breadcrumb trail at the top should show something like **Lessons > Week 3**.
2. Click on the **Add Text** button.
3. In the **Text Editor** box, type a heading for your weekly subpage, such as *Week 3 Genetics.* Press Enter. Provide the due date for the week's assignments, such as: *This week's assignments are due Thursday, September 8, by 11:00 pm.*

> **TIP:** Do not make assignments due at midnight – it's confusing to students!
>
> **Here's why:** Midnight (12 AM) on June 1, for example, is the start of that day, not the end of it. Thus, assignments due at 12 AM on June 1 are actually due at the end of the prior day (May 31). If an assignment is due by the end of June 1, make the assignment due at 11:55 PM on June 1.

4. When formatting the heading, make it accessible: Use your mouse to highlight the text of your heading, then on the editing toolbar, click the **Format** drop-down menu (which says **Normal**), then select a heading, such as **Heading 1**.
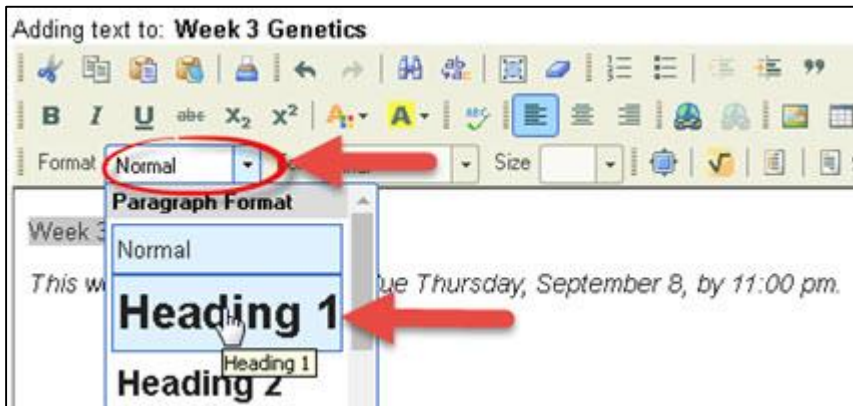
5. If you like, you can put your due date in bold, italics, or a color, to give it emphasis. Just highlight the due date text and click the text editor icons to italicize, bold, or colorize your text.

   TIP: If colorizing text, limit yourself to three different colors at most on a page. Choose dark colors that stand out on the page and create high contrast.

6. Click **Save**. Now you'll see your heading and due dates displayed at the top of the subpage.

Step 4: Add an overview to your weekly subpage

It's a good practice to provide an introduction to each week's lesson, just like you would in the classroom. Let your students know **what they will learn** and **why it's important**! This is an opportunity to communicate learning outcomes to students in a meaningful, practical way.

- If your overview is short, you can use **Add Text** to put the overview on the weekly page.
- If your overview is long, create a new subpage and put the detailed text there. To do this:
  - On your weekly subpage, click **Add Subpage** at the top. Type in a subpage title, such as *Week 3 Overview*, and click **Create**. You are now on your new "overview" subpage.
  - Click **Add Text**, and type in your overview. Click **Save** when done.
  - Use the breadcrumb trail along the top to return to your weekly subpage. There you will see a link to the new overview subpage. If you want to add a note beneath this link, click **Edit** beside the subpage link, enter a description, and click **Update Item**.

  TIP: Are you limited to a text introduction? No! Some instructors create a video, podcast, or graphic with explanations.

Step 5: Add the textbook reading assignment

In most courses, students will have a textbook reading assignment each week. On your weekly subpage, use **Add Text** to provide details about what they need to read this week.
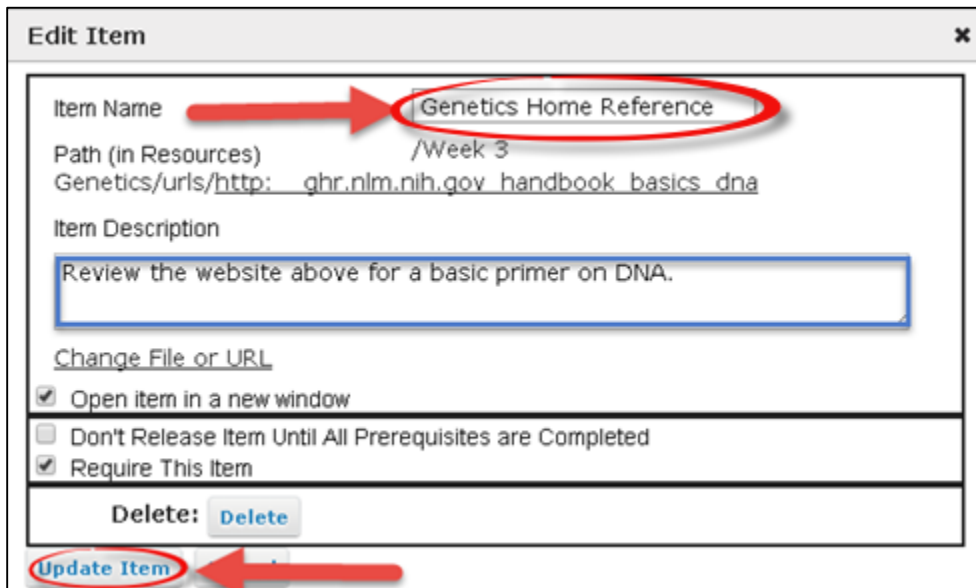
Step 6: Add Resources and links to websites

In addition to your textbook, you may have additional materials, such as documents (PowerPoints, Word docs, PDFs, etc.) or web links for students to read or review. In Lessons, **Add Resource** allows you to create *links* to web sites and to your PowerPoints, Word documents, or PDFs.

Step 6a: Link to a website

This is a fast way to add a link to a web site that relates to your week's lesson:

1. Find a web site you want to link to and copy its address.
2. On your weekly subpage, click on **Add Resource**.
3. Paste the web address in the URL box. Click **Save**.
4. Now let's make the link more human-friendly and accessible. To do that: Click **Edit** beside the new link. In *Item Name*, type a meaningful title, such as *Genetics Home Reference*. Optionally, you can add a helpful description in the *Item Description* box.

5. Click **Update Item.**
6. Click on the link. It will open in a new browser tab. To get back to Sakai, simply close the new tab.

Step 6b: Link to a document in Resources

The **Resources** area serves as a repository for all documents in a course site. In the **Lessons** tool, you can easily link to documents that are stored in Resources.

IMPORTANT: Before proceeding, make sure you have uploaded a document (such as a PowerPoint presentation, Word doc, or PDF) to the **Resources** area of your course site. (For more info, see the Resources help page at http://tinyurl.com/sakai-resources)

TIP: When creating documents, use the accessibility techniques for PowerPoint, Word and Excel.

1. On your weekly Lessons subpage, click on the **Add Resource** button.
2. Click on **Choose Existing File.**
3. In the dialog box, you'll see the contents of your Resources area. If needed, click on a folder to locate the document you want to link to. To the *right* of the *document name*, click **Select**. (Don't click on the file name or you'll open the file.)

4. At the *bottom* of the dialog box, click on **Continue.** You'll see the new link to your document added to the subpage.

5. To make your resource link human-friendly and accessible, beside the link, click **Edit.** In the *Item Name box*, type a [descriptive title](#), such as *Chapter 3 Genetic Discoveries (pdf)*. Optionally, in *Item Description*, add more information about the file.

6. Click **Update Item** to save your changes.

Step 7: Insert a YouTube video

Lessons has been configured to easily display YouTube videos. (For other types of online videos, you'll need to link to the video, as outlined in Step 6a above.)

1. Find a YouTube video (if possible, a [closed-captioned video](#)). Copy the full web address of the video.
2. On your weekly Lessons subpage, click on **Add Multimedia.**
3. Click in the URL box. Paste the address of the YouTube video and click **Save**.


4. Optional: To add a description that will display below the video, click on the **Edit** button to the left of the video. Add your description and click **Update Item**.
5. As a best practice, provide a web link to the video as well, in case your students can't display the video. To do this, follow the instructions in step 6a on page 3.

Step 8: Link to a Forum Topic, Assignment, or Test/Quiz

On your weekly Lessons subpages, it's important to include links to activities such as forums, assignments, or tests/quizzes that you've created elsewhere in Sakai. This way, students don't have to go hunting around in Sakai looking for a particular forum discussion, assignment, test, or quiz.

After you create a Forum Topic or an Assignment or have *published* a Test or Quiz, follow the steps below to place a link to these items on your weekly Lessons page:

1. On your weekly Lessons page, click on one of the three activity links at the top:
    o **Add Assignment**
    o **Add Quiz** (the Test or quiz must be *published*)
    o **More Tools**, then click **Add Forum Topic**
2. A page displays listing existing items. Click on the round button to the left of an item you want to link to, such as *Week 3 Forum* as shown below.
3. Click **Use Selected Item.** You'll see that a link to the activity has been created**.**
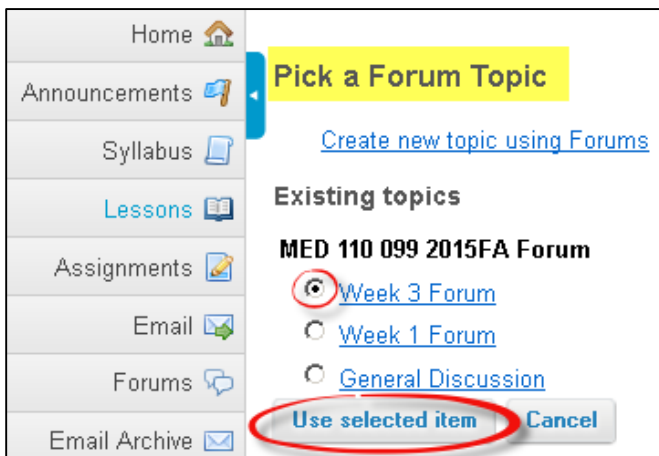

4. To add a description, click **Edit** to the left of the link:
    o Enter an **Item Description**, to provide brief information about the assignment or activity. For example, you could remind students when it is due.
    o Click **Update Item** to save your changes.

Step 9: View Lessons using Student view

Let's find out what your new subpage looks like to your students.

In the upper right corner, beside "View Site As", click on the drop-down box, and select **Student.** None of the instructor controls will be displayed on your Lessons page, and you'll be able to see what it looks like to students.
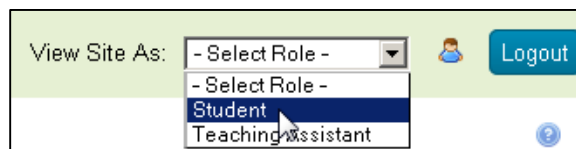
Click around and review your content, to see how it will look to students.

IMPORTANT: When you finish browsing in student view, be sure to click **Exit Student View** so you'll be able to access your instructor controls again.

Important "Behind-the-Scenes" Information

When you use the *Add Resources* and *Add Multimedia* features in **Lessons**, Sakai automatically creates a folder in **Resources** with the title of your subpage (such as *Week 3 Genetics*). In the folder, it stores the addresses of websites and YouTube videos you linked to. Therefore, it's important that you…

- **Don't delete folders** (**or their contents**) from Resources if they match the names of your Lessons subpages, or you'll delete your Lessons content!
- And, when you copy (import) your course content from one semester to the next, **ALWAYS be sure to copy (import) both Lessons AND Resources**.

You can find additional info on using Sakai's Lessons tool on the Sakai Help for Instructors website: [http://courses.durhamtech.edu/wiki/]