Tips for Effective Course Design

Below are recommendations for designing a user-friendly course.

Lessons Learned

Make it easy for students to find things

- Use the **Lessons** tool as the central hub where students can find everything they need in one place.

- On the main Lessons page, create a subpage for each week of the class.

- On each weekly subpage, put everything your students need to know and do that week, including:
  - A heading or title
  - Due dates
  - Overview / Learning Outcomes - *What will students learn and why is it important?*
  - Presentation of content - *Textbook reading assignments, links to lecture notes, PowerPoints, videos, etc.*
  - Activities and assessments - *Link to quizzes, tests, assignments, or forums*

Consistency matters!

- Don't rename the **Lessons** tool on the course menu. Just leave it named **Lessons**!
  - That way, students taking several courses will know exactly where to find things in each site.

- Within Lessons, on each weekly subpage, follow a consistent pattern for presenting content.
  - The **weekly lesson template** can help you plan each week's content and organize it consistently.

- If teaching online, choose a **consistent deadline** for each week's assignments. For example, every Tuesday at 11 pm or every Friday at 5 pm.
  - **Do not make activities due at midnight!** It's confusing for students -- and for instructors too. (Read why midnight is confusing.)
  - Consider making your activities due during the week, when you may be more available to answer student questions.

How can you release weekly subpages at a specific date/time?

- While on the subpage you want to hide, click **More Tools** > **Settings** to hide the page and its contents until you are ready for students to see it.

Streamline your course menu

- Move important course tools to the top of the course menu, to make it easy for your students to navigate your course.
  - We recommend that you move these tools to the top of the course menu: *Home*, *Announcements*, *Syllabus*, *Lessons*, *Gradebook*, and *Test & Quizzes*.

- Hide menu items that students don't need to see. To hide menu items:
  - Click **Site Info > Page Order**. Beside a tool, click on the light bulb to dim or "hide" it from students. Click Save.

- It's up to you if you want to show or hide these tools: *Roster*, *Email*, and *Email Archive*.

Streamline your course menu (continued)

- As shown below, the remaining tools can be hidden from students -- if you are using Lessons to link to activities and to documents (Resources, Forums, Assignments) plus Schedule, User Activity, Statistics and Site Info:

Important Tools	Instructors Decide to Show/Hide Tools	Hide These Tools (if using Lessons to link to activities/documents)
•Home •Announcements •Syllabus •Lessons •Gradebook •Test & Quizzes	•Roster •Email •Email Archive	•Resources •Forums •Assignments •Schedule •User Activity •Statistics •Site Info

Multimedia tips

- If your PowerPoint files are very large (> 3 MB), before uploading to Sakai, save the PowerPoints as PDFs to reduce the size and to make it easier for your students to view.

- When searching for YouTube videos, try to find videos that are closed captioned and/or provide transcripts.

- In Lessons, use **Add Multimedia** to embed a YouTube video on the page.
    - If you embed YouTube videos, provide a link to the video too, in case students have difficulty displaying the embedded video.

- If you want to put images on your subpages, consider copyright. Find images that are free to use (public domain) or licensed for non-commercial use with attribution (Creative Commons).
    - Photos for Class is a great place to find usable images -- and it will add the attribution citation for you!
    - Or you can Google image search and filter by usage rights
    - Pixabay is another good source of images you can use
    - Read more about finding and using images

Lessons and Resources are interconnected

When you add content in Lessons, in many cases Sakai automatically creates a folder in Resources with the title of your subpage (such as *Week 1* or *Week 3*) and stores content from your subpages there. 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 import (copy) your course content from one semester to the next, ALWAYS be sure to import (copy) Resources along with Lessons.

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