

Assignment Type: Blogs

What is it

Practically speaking, a blog is an online journal or communication tool where an individual or group regularly adds new entries to share information, thoughts and/or opinions with others. Readers can respond with their own typed comments. Technically, it is a website—but its use doesn't require any special skills. Editing a blog is as easy as editing any regular document.

Why use it

The blog is a format that allows students to reflect on what they know, further integrate their knowledge, and show their unique understanding to others. Blog posts tend to be qualitatively different from journals and formal academic papers. They allow students to communicate in ways that are personally meaningful and consistent with the current “content creation” aspect of our digital culture. Also, anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that students work harder to prepare work that will be shared with a broader audience than their instructor.

A blog is easy to set up within any course in Blackboard to provide a place for an individual or group of students within a class to post written content. Each content entry on the blog is a discrete item that is automatically labeled with author and time/date. The term blog originates from this “web log” aspect of its operation. In practice, it is common for a series of posts to center around a common theme or topic. Blogs inside Blackboard courses are only available to the members of that course.

How to use it

A blog may be appropriate for assignments or projects that require students to share relatively small amounts of content such as an idea, targeted list of facts, a short summary, or a set of recommended resources. Blogs can be set up for single authors or groups of authors, including the entire class. You decide whether the entire class or only select students, such as a particular group, can read the blog.

While the Journal tool in Blackboard may be appropriate for more personal reflective journaling, assignments involving content that is appropriate for “public” viewing can utilize the Blog tool. The online nature and typical format of blog posts (one to two short paragraphs) permit students to practice written communication in a uniquely digital-age manner. Students often enjoy sharing their reflections and also rise to the occasion when they know their writing will be viewed by others. Your blog assignment instructions may include prompts that are similar to Discussion Board

prompts and a requirement that each student read and comment on a specified number of posts authored by peers.

A blog may even be used for an asynchronous debate. Students may be assigned to provide “point” and “counterpoint” on an issue as individuals (unassigned to one side of the issue or the other) or as a member of a team. A sequence in which students are required to contribute could be decided in advance, in a team situation it could be left up to each team (in the tradition of high school debate competitions) or the students may simply be instructed to “jump in” at their convenience to contribute a defined number of posts as they follow the twists and turns of the series of posts. Either way, the blog format allows all students in the class to easily follow the sequential trail of conversation as two sides of an issue are being debated.

Considerations

When they hear a “Web 2.0” label such as “blog” or “website,” some students may fear that their current technological skills will be inadequate to complete their assigned task. However, students can be assured that working with a blog involves no special skills. While there is virtually no learning curve with this tool, the digital communication skills that students pick up using a blog are important and expected in many 21st century occupations.

Instruction and assessment that uses blogs

Any kind of content that should be reflected upon, analyzed critically, or that needs to be integrated with other knowledge is appropriate for a blog assignment. Blogs offer a means to expand the student’s writing and communication skills to new platforms. They can also be used as a vehicle for stating and defending positions, organizing and presenting sets of information, or providing examples of content in action. A sense of community can be created among students who read what their peers have written, share their own understandings, and comment on each other’s thoughts and work on a blog.

Level of Bloom’s Taxonomy: Sample Learning Objectives

Blogging assignments can be constructed to assess accomplishment of learning outcomes at any level of the cognitive domain on Bloom’s Taxonomy. Here are a few examples of objectives from different levels of Bloom’s that can be demonstrated by students through writing and the incorporation of images, charts, illustrations, and multimedia in blog posts:

- Knowledge: Define key terms about natural selection in your own words.
- Understanding: Describe the character traits of the protagonist in the story, citing behaviors and actions that indicate those traits.

- Application: Illustrate how the four basic laws of supply and demand work by providing a concrete example of each in action.
- Analysis: Differentiate between two approaches to business valuation.
- Evaluation: Critique the research methodology employed in the study described in the assigned journal article.
- Creation: Formulate a complete one-week meal plan that is nutritionally balanced.

Resources

- [Blackboard Self-Help Documentation on Blogs](#)
 - Task aids provide information on how to set up and use the built-in blog tool in your online Blackboard course.
- [Blogs in Plain English](#)
 - A short three minute video providing an overview of how blogs work.
- [7 things you should know about...blogs](#)
 - A brief about blogs from Educause's awesome "7 things" series.
- [Blogging for an Internship – Research Article](#)
 - Describes the use of blogging to facilitate learning during the internship experience. Students had positive perceptions of blogging as a tool for learning for information management, social support, self-reflection and communication purposes.
 - **Reference:** Chu, S.K.W., Kwan, A.C.M., & Warning, P. (2012). Blogging for information management, learning, and social support during internship. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 15 (2), 168-178. Retrieved from https://www.j-ets.net/ets/journals/15_2/15.pdf
- [Blogging for Critical Reflection – Research Article](#)
 - Blogs were used as discussion forums and for critical self-reflection about learning processes and professional growth. Students were reflective and found the blog platform useful for both reflection and communication.
 - **Reference:** Yang, S.H. (2009). Using blogs to enhance critical reflection and community of practice. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12 (2), 11-21. Retrieved from http://www.ifets.info/journals/12_2/2.pdf