

Configuring Content Area Blogs in Blackboard

What is in this document?

This document contains instructions for configuring content area blogs, which are created in the content area of a course. Content area blogs are generally used for journaling and writing assignments and can be associated with columns in the **Grade Center** for entering grades. You can create as many content area blogs as you wish in a Blackboard course. You can even create separate blogs for different groups of students collaborating on a project or researching a topic. Content area blogs can be copied to the same or a different Blackboard course site and the content can be exported as web pages.

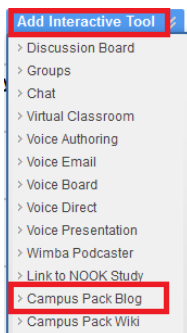
In contrast, there is only one **Course Blog** in a Blackboard course and it is configured in the **Control Panel**. The **Course Blog** is often used to share news and announcements. Blog entries of a **Course Blog** can be exported as web pages but the blog itself cannot be copied to another Blackboard course. Please see our document *Configuring the Course Blog in Blackboard* for instructions on how to set it up.

The two kinds of blog tools that are available in Blackboard and their locations can easily confuse instructors and students. We recommend that you give students precise instructions about where to find the blog and share instructions on how to read and write blog entries contained in our document *Reading and Posting to Blogs*.

Creating a content area blog

You can add a blog to any course or organization **Content Area**, such as **Class Sessions**. To create a content area blog:

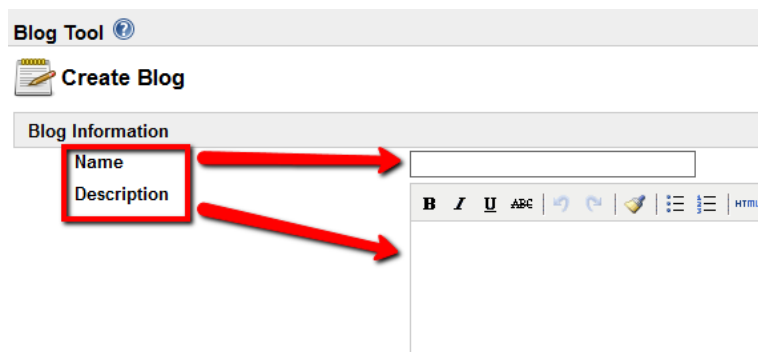
1. From the course navigation menu, select the content area, such as **Class Sessions** in which you wish to create the blog.
2. Click on **Campus Pack Blog** under **Add Interactive Tool** on the upper right hand corner.



3. You will see the **Create Blog** window, which has four sections:

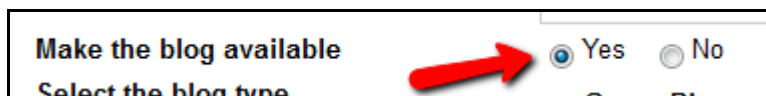
1) **Blog Information**

Enter a name for the blog and briefly describe the purpose of the blog. If you are creating a group blog, you might want to include a list of group members in the blog description.



• **Make the blog available**

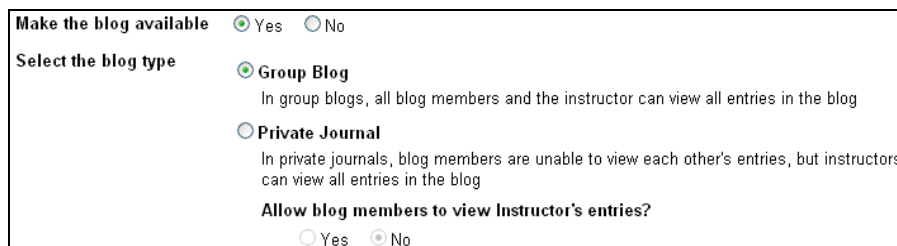
Selecting **No** hides the blog from students. You can change this option at any time by clicking on the **Edit** link under the drop down menu.



• **Select blog type**

You can choose to create a **Group Blog** or a **Private Journal**.

In a **Group Blog**, all blog members and instructors can read and write in the blog. In a **Private Journal**, blog members can write and view their own entries but are unable to view each other's entries. Instructors can view all the entries.



- **Enable an RSS feed?** An RSS feed is a document containing either a summary of content from an associated web site or the full text. RSS is convenient to gather information updates from different sites using a “reader” or “aggregator.” Users need to subscribe to the RSS feeds provided by the sites. More information about RSS can be found in the short handout *7 Things You Should Know About RSS* (<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7024.pdf>) and the video *RSS in Plain English* (http://www.commoncraft.com/rss_plain_english).

Note: As the screenshot below indicates, enabling a feed allows people with access to the blog to make its contents visible to people everywhere.

Specify whether an RSS feed should be created for this blog. If enabled, the feed link will be displayed to anyone with access to the blog. Note that publishing the blog via an RSS feed means that anyone with access to the blog could make the contents of the blog public to people outside the system. For this reason, you cannot enable RSS feeds on a Private Journal.

Enable an RSS feed? Yes No

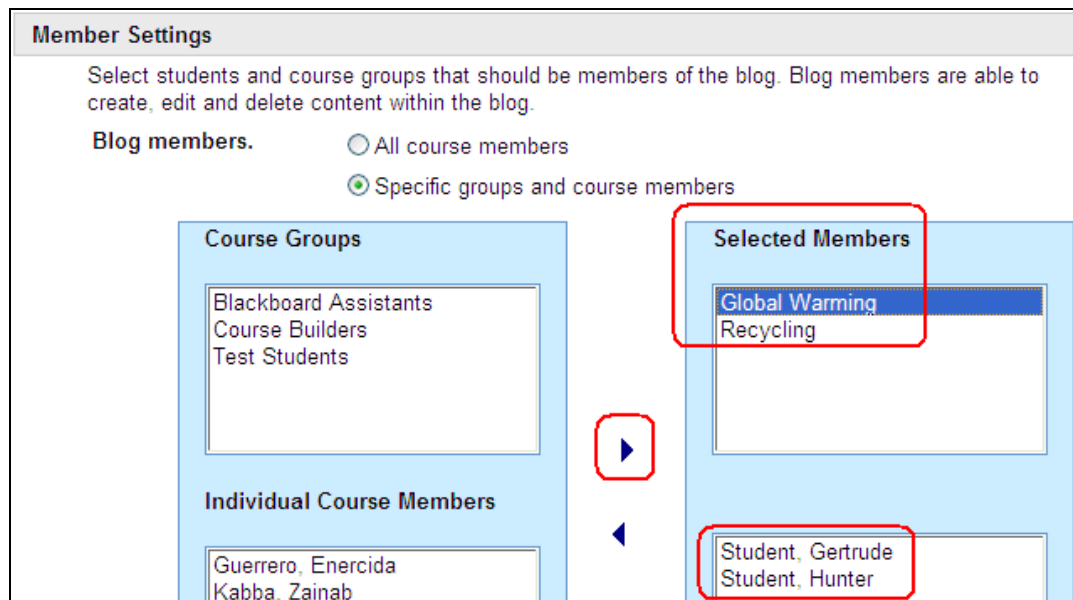
- **Select the values to use to reference users in the blog**
 Student’s entries will be referenced with the name value you select for this field. Leave this option set to the default (**Person Name**), i.e., the student’s first and last name. One’s **User Name** is a string of 20 digits which is not descriptive and usually not even recognizable by its owner.
- **Text Direction for blog content**
 Leave this option set to the default (**left to right**) unless the blog will be written in a language that reads right to left.

Select the value to use to reference users in the blog User Name Person Name Person Name and User Name Given Name

Text direction for blog content Left to Right Right to Left

2) Member Settings

Members are all individuals who will be able to create blog entries. Select all class members or participants who will be able to post entries to this blog. (You can think of “members” as the writers of the blog and “non-members” as the potential readers of the blog.) You can select members one by one or choose **All course members**. If you have already set up **Groups** within Blackboard, you can also select blog members by group. To select specific groups or course members, click on the name of the group or the student and click on the right arrow to place them in the **Selected Members** column.



- **Allow students to permanently delete blog entries** When students delete blog entries, the entries are removed from the blog but may be restored later from the editing history. A note remains in the blog stating that an entry was deleted on a certain date. However, if you allow students to **permanently** delete blog entries, they have an additional choice that allows them to destroy all of the data associated with the blog entry, so that it will be impossible to restore the content. In most cases, students should **not** be able to **permanently** delete blog entries, as this may cause permanent loss of student work as well as all comments made. Blog members can edit their entries and instructors can delete blog entries, if necessary.
- **Allow members to export their blog entries** Select this option if you want to allow blog members to export entries in the form of a zip file. The zip file contains all the entries in the form of web pages. An additional file named “index” serves as the table of contents and links to the different entries. The exported site does not have editing tools but the export process allows you and your students to store the contents of blog entries on your personal computers, browse the site offline, back up material, or post it to another website.
- **Allow members of the blog to:**

View Comments Select this option if you want students to be able to view comments made on blog entries.

Write Comments Select this option if you want blog members to be able to comment on each other's entries. If this option is not selected, only the instructor(s) will be able to comment. If neither **View Comments** nor **Write Comments** is selected, instructors can write comments that serve as private notes for themselves.

Delete Comments Select this option if you want students to be able to delete comments on blog entries that they wrote themselves.

- **Set Date and time restrictions for editing by group members.** Use this option to control when group members are able to edit blog content. For example, if you are using the blog as an assignment, you may want to disallow editing after the due date. The blog will still be visible to group members, unless you make it invisible. By default, there is no restriction on when group members can edit the blog.

3) Non-Member Settings

“Non-members” refers to anyone who cannot create blog entries.

- **Allow non-members to view the blog.** In some cases, you may want a blog to be private for a period of time, after which it can be viewed by the entire class. Use this option to control when non-members can view the blog. Non-members can never edit the blog (except to leave comments, if allowed). By default, there is no restriction on when non-members can view the blog, if viewing is enabled for them.

Non-Member Settings
 Allow non-members to view the blog
If yes, set date and time restrictions for viewing the blog
 Display After Display Until

Apr	10	2012		Apr	10	2012	
11	:	00	AM	11	:	00	AM

Allow non-members of the blog to:
 View Comments
 Write Comments
 Delete Comments

- **Allow non-members to:**

View Comments

Select this option to allow non-members to view all comments.

Write Comments

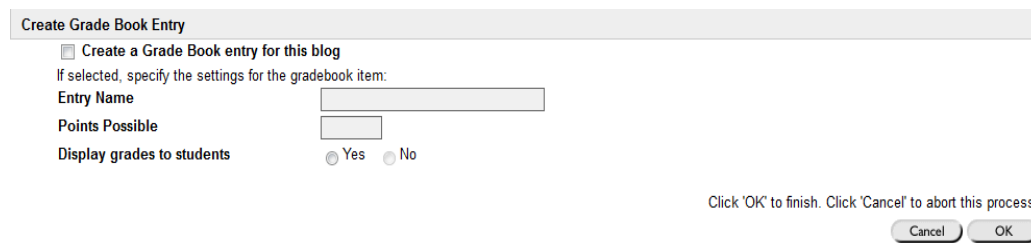
Select this option to allow non-members to comment on blog entries posted by blog members.

Delete Comments

Select this option to allow non-members to delete comments that they wrote themselves.

4) Create Grade Book Entry

If you check this option, Blackboard will automatically create a new column for the blog in the **Grade Book**. You can select a name and category for the **Grade Book** entry, can indicate the number of points the assignment is worth, and can choose whether or not to make the **Grade Book** entry visible to students.



Note: We do not recommend you select the **Create a Grade Book entry** option if you have created individual journals since it will create a new column entry for each student.

4. Click the **OK** button.

What do students see?

Once you have completed setting up the blog, your students will see in the content area a **View** link to enter the blog. To post their entries, they should click on **View** and then on **new entry**.



The document *Reading and Posting to Blogs in Blackboard* available at:

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/icit/help-docs/repository/files/pdf-files/ReadingPostingBlogs.pdf>

This contains step-by-step instructions. You may want to make a link to it from your course site.



Journals

[View](#)

Click on the "view" link above to enter in this blog your thoughts and questions about course readings. Your writing is only viewed by the instructor. Please complete this task every week before midnight on Wednesdays. You will receive 1 point on your semester grade for every journal entry.

If you have further questions or need assistance, please email bb@hunter.cuny.edu or contact the Technology Resource Center (Thomas Hunter 402) at 212-772-4357. For assistance designing learning activities that incorporate blogs and to discuss advantages and drawbacks of the different tools, please contact one of ICIT's Educational Technologists at edtech@hunter.cuny.edu.