Virtual Classroom

(OPTIONAL)

Blackboard also provides a synchronous communication tool, which requires users to be available at the same time to have a conversation. The Virtual Classroom provides the following features: Chat, Question & Answer, and Whiteboard (for drawing and web page display).

**Note:** You must have Java and JavaScript enabled on your web browser to run the Virtual Classroom.

**Step 1:** Click on the Communication button from the Navigation bar.

**Step 2:** Select Virtual Classroom.

**Step 3:** Choose Enter Virtual Classroom.

**Enter Virtual Classroom**

In order to participate in the Virtual Classroom, you must have a Java Enabled browser.

**View Archives**

You can find all the archives for your Virtual Classroom, sorted by date, here.

**Step 4:** Using the various areas in the Virtual Classroom you can draw, ask questions, navigate web pages, or carry on a chat.

**Student View**
Instructors have three additional tabs

The **Access Control** tab allows you to enable and disable student access to **Chat**, **Q&A**, **Draw**, and **Navigate**. The **Floor** option allows you to grant access to a single user while restricting other students.

**Tips for Using Virtual Classroom**

The Virtual Classroom is a separate program that runs within Blackboard and may take a few minutes to load.

- Encourage students to log in five minutes early to insure that they are on time.

The Virtual Classroom can be tricky to use at first for both instructors and students. The instructor has a multitude of things to attend to: guiding the chat, answering questions (only visible by checking the Incoming Questions Panel), setting access control, and using slides and the whiteboard.

- Turn off features when they are not being used (see below).
- Write out a script beforehand, saving instructions or questions in a word processing program and then pasting them into the chat when needed.
- Post instructions for the chat session in a document in the course.

The Virtual Classroom can be disabled for the course, but enabled for a group.

- Instructors may wish to create groups consisting of the instructor and a single student for private office hours.

If you want to have more control over what students are doing, you can block them from any of the four activities (Question, Chat, Draw, and Navigate) or use the floor option. The floor option is comparable to raising your hand in class; students cannot perform any activity until the instructor has acknowledged and granted their request for the floor.
• Instructors are given the **Access Control Panel** (far right tab at the bottom half of the window), which controls student access to: **Question, Chat, Draw, and Navigate**.

If students use the Virtual Classroom for social chat, you may not wish to have the chat archives cluttered with social chatter.

• Set guidelines for the use of a chat.

• Create a group with all students in it and enable only Virtual Classroom and/or the Discussion Board. Remember, it is still important to set guidelines for conduct in these areas.

All chat sessions that happen on the same day are archived into one file. This archive cannot be edited. Archives include time stamps for participant login and out, chat text, web addresses entered in the whiteboard, etc. The actual contents of the whiteboard are not archived. A session will not archive until everyone has logged out of the session. These archives can be made unavailable to students.

• You can post excerpts of chats by copying and pasting text into a document or message.

• Download and save the archived chat file for the appropriate date, then delete it from the course.
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| Chat                    | • The Virtual Classroom is a synchronous (simultaneous) tool.  
• Participants type in messages in a message box and press the enter key to submit.  
• These messages appear to all participants in the text box prefaced by the submitter’s name.                                                   | • Chat discussion is not threaded and may be difficult to follow. Chat works well for brainstorming or if the discussion is well structured ahead of time.  
• Text can be pasted from a word processing document into the chat session.                                                                                              |
| Question and Answer (Q&A) | • Individual participants may ask public or private questions. Instructors may then provide public or private answers.                                                                                      | • The Instructor’s Inbox is used to receive and answer questions. There is no alert for new questions so the Inbox must be checked regularly.  
• You cannot see the Q&A and Chat areas at the same time.  
• You must toggle between the Chat, Q&A and Inbox panels.  
• Because of these problems, may want to turn off Q&A under the Access Control Panel.  
• Once a student sends a question, it is not visible until the instructor sends an answer. Then they are both visible in the Q&A area.  
• There is no way for a student to know if an instructor chooses to reply publicly to a private question.                                      |
| Whiteboard – Draw       | • Contains drawing tools.  
• Can type text as well.  
• Instructors and participants can edit, modify, and clear the whiteboard.                                                                                   | • Font sizes, styles, color, line width, and a grid can be set.  
• For shapes, choose color and brightness, shape, and then either the filled or empty ellipse for filled or outlined shape.  
• To draw and end a line, hold down the mouse until finished and then release.  
• To draw and end a shape, hold down the mouse and click for each line. Double click when finished.  
• Whiteboard drawings must be created during the pertinent session and cannot be saved from session to session. They are not archived. |
| Whiteboard – Display Slides | • Instructors can create slides that can be edited, modified, and drawn upon.  
• Participants can navigate the slides.  
• Up to four slides can be used.                                                                                                                                       | • Slides cannot be saved or archived.  
• In preparation, images can be saved as web pages on a server or uploaded in a course folder and accessed using a URL. Right clicking on an image will give you the URL to load. |
| Whiteboard – Display Web Pages | • Participants can type web addresses in the Locater box.                                                                                                                                                  | • Web sites that use frames, Java, or JavaScript are not supported and may not run correctly.  
• You cannot refresh the browser or stop it from loading.  
• Before class, check all sites in Virtual Classroom to make sure they load correctly.  
• You can use the drawing tools to draw on a web page.                                                                                                                |
| Access Control          | • Instructors can enable/disable Chat, Q&A, Draw, and Navigate.  
• Instructors may give a participant the floor (ability to use a feature while disabling it for other participants).                                                 | • Disable the features that are not being used to prevent distraction.  
• Instructors may give a participant the floor with or without an actual request from the participant. In either case, the student is notified that he/she has the floor. |