

# Build from Scratch: Getting Started

This article offers a guide to the essential first steps for creating a Brightspace course from the ground up. For more detailed instructions on specific tasks, be sure to explore the in-text links provided throughout the article or visit the [Brightspace for Faculty webpage](#).

## Before you Build

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Before you start building your Brightspace course from scratch, ensure you've completed the following essential preparations:

1. **Complete Training:** Complete the [required Brightspace Basics for Faculty training](#) (must be signed in to My Tri-C Space to access link). This is available online, takes about 3 hours, and will save your progress if you cannot take it all at once.
2. **Complete Course Design Process:** Clearly outline the course design, aligning it with learning objectives and outcomes, and structure it by weeks, modules, or lessons. Complete the optional [Course Mapping online workshop](#) in Compass to learn more about alignment. [Use Brightspace's Discover Tool](#) to search for "Sample Course Layouts" to review commonly used course structures.
3. **Finalize Your Course Syllabus:** Have a detailed and complete syllabus ready. Refer to the [Curriculum Development webpage](#) for more information, including the Syllabus Part A Checklist.
4. **Choose a Grading System:** Decide whether you will use a Points-Based or Weighted grading system.

## Request a Sandbox

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It's highly recommended to develop your course in a Sandbox environment before transferring it to the CRN course site. Using a Sandbox offers several benefits:

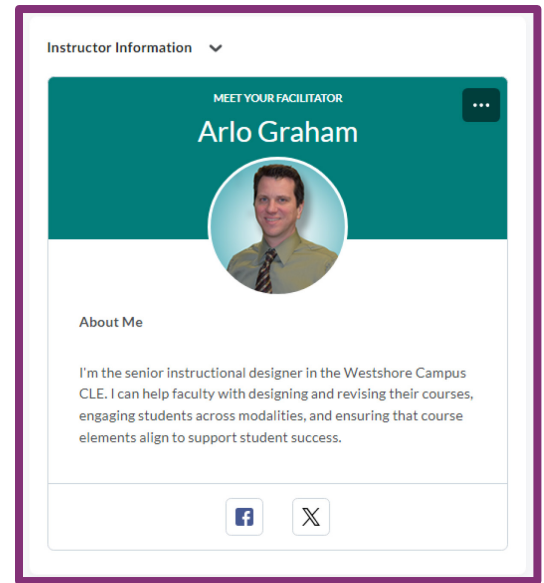
1. **Safe Experimentation:** Practice and experiment without affecting the live CRN course site.
2. **Course Cancellation and Reassignment Protection:** If a course is canceled or reassigned, you will lose access to the CRN site and its content. However, your work in a Sandbox site will be preserved. For reassigned courses, any content you have added to the CRN site will no longer be accessible to you *and it will become available to the new instructor*.
3. **Easy Transfer:** Quickly copy your Sandbox course into a new CRN site for late course assignments.
4. **Keep it Clean:** Copying from a Sandbox to a new CRN rather than a previously used CRN keeps your course clean, prevents student info from being copied, and mitigates potential issues that could corrupt your course files and the copy process.

Follow the instructions in the [Create a Sandbox Site article](#) to set up your Sandbox.

## Complete the Profile Widget

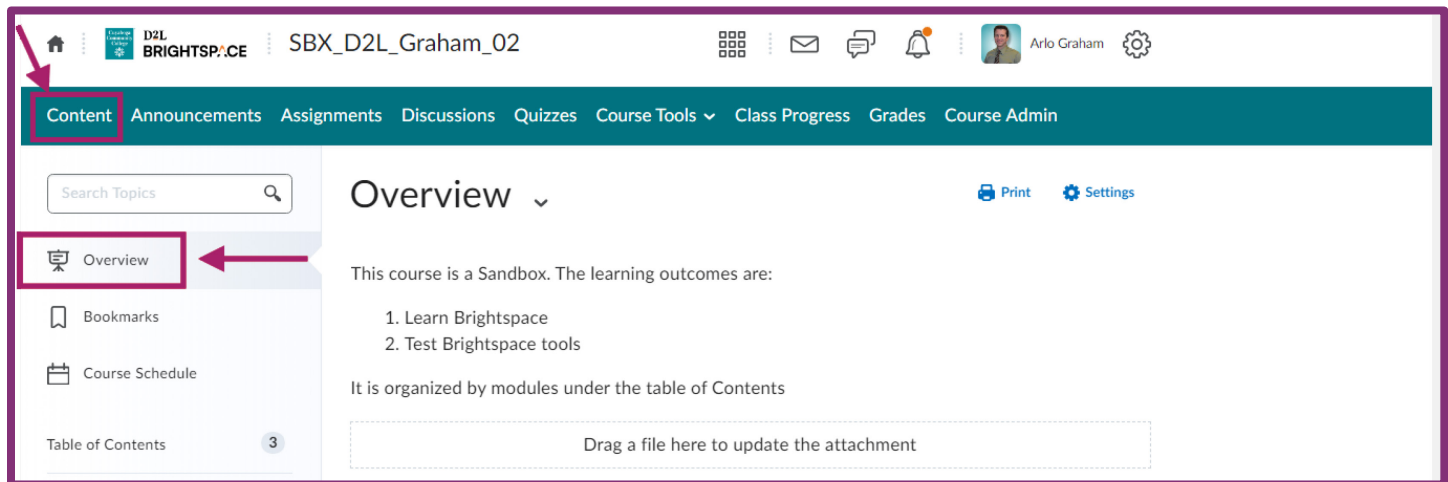
Fostering student engagement and promoting meaningful interactions in online courses are essential for creating a dynamic learning environment. A powerful way to achieve this is by introducing yourself to your students. Share details about your background, skills, and experiences, and make sure to include your contact information.

In Brightspace, you can utilize the Instructor Profile Widget to upload a profile picture, craft a brief introduction, and provide relevant background information. If you have more to share than the widget allows, consider creating a “Meet Your Instructor” page, which you can set up in the Start Here Module section. This additional resource offers an opportunity for a more comprehensive introduction and helps build a stronger connection with your students.



## Complete the Course Overview page

The Course Overview page is found on the Content page at the top of the left menu.



It can be used to provide general information about the course offering such as:

- A course introduction
- The course description (copied from the College’s catalog)
- Learning objectives and outcomes
- A description of course structure and navigation
- A link to the syllabus (using a [Brightspace Quicklink](#))
- Directions to the “Start Here” module

The Course Overview page differs from a “Start Here” module by presenting general information about the course rather than specific information about your approach to teaching the course.

## Create a “Start Here” Module

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Brightspace courses are [structured and organized into modules](#), with the "Start Here" module often listed as the first item in the Table of Contents. This introductory module is crucial for setting the stage for the course and typically includes the following key components:

- "Meet Your Instructor" page (more detailed information than the Widget about your background, teaching philosophy, etc.)
- Course syllabus
- Guidelines for netiquette and online interactions
- Textbook information
- A description of course structure and navigation
- Links and reminders to use the [Library](#) and [Tutoring](#) services
- Other course-specific details

This comprehensive start helps students navigate the course effectively and understand what to expect. The Start Here Module differs from the Course Overview page by presenting information that is specific to your course design, teaching methods, and preferences.

## “Additional Resources” Module (optional)

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Including an “Additional Resources” module is optional but can be highly beneficial. This module provides a space for general information and resources that extend beyond the specific course content. It may include useful links such as:

- The Tri-C library
- Tutoring services
- Counseling support
- Student Accessibility Services
- Links to other College-wide [student resources](#)

Adding this module helps students access valuable support and information to enhance their overall learning experience.

## Webex Link for Office Hours and Synchronous Online Classes

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To hold virtual office hours and synchronous online classes you will need to create and [set up a Webex Tool Link](#) for your course.

If the course does not have synchronous online classes, create a module titled “Office Hours”, otherwise title the module “Class Meetings and Office Hours”. Add the Webex link and in the module description include the class meeting times (if needed), your office hours, and instructions to use the Webex link.

## Setup the Gradebook

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Once you have created the "Start Here" and "Additional Resources" modules, it's a good idea to set up the Gradebook before proceeding with the rest of the course. Utilize the [Brightspace Gradebook Wizard](#) to guide you through this setup. A key decision at this stage is choosing between a Points-Based or Weighted grading system. If you opt for a Weighted system, make sure to use [Grade Categories](#) to organize your assignments and assessments effectively, ensuring they are appropriately weighted and managed.

## Build your Course Structure

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With your introduction, course information, syllabus, and gradebook set up, it's time to build the overall course structure. In Brightspace, modules serve as the primary way to organize your course content. Think of modules as folders on your computer - they help group and sequence your materials effectively. Organizing your course into modules allows you to present topics and content in a structured manner. You can organize and title modules by week, chapter, or lesson.

Sub-modules act as smaller sections within a module, akin to subfolders on your computer, offering a finer level of organization for your content. It is recommended to use sub-modules sparingly as they add a layer of complexity to course navigation for students. Only use them when necessary, for instance when there is a larger number of content items in the main module.

Just as a textbook chapter starts with an introduction or overview, each Brightspace lesson should start with an introduction. This will provide an overview of what students can expect, setting the stage and preparing them for the content they're about to explore. Here is one example of a Week 1 Module structure:

- Week 1 (Main Module)
  - Module Intro (content page)
  - Resource 1 (content page, link to textbook content, link to external tools/resources)
  - Activity / Formative Assessment (discussion, assignment, or quiz)
  - Resource 2 (content page, link to textbook content, link to external tools/resources)
  - Activity / Formative Assessment (discussion, assignment, or quiz)
  - Module Assessment (quiz)
  - Module Wrap Up and Next Steps (content page)

Don't forget to use [Brightspace's Discover Tool](#) to search for "Sample Course Layouts" to view commonly used course structures.

You have two main options for this task:

1. **Table of Contents View:** This method involves [adding new modules directly from the Table of Contents](#) and then populating each module with your content. It's ideal if you have a complete list of course materials, resources, and content ready to upload and integrate.
2. **Course Builder Tool:** The [Course Builder Tool](#) offers several advantages, especially if you're still finalizing your course materials. It allows you to use placeholders for content that's not yet ready, easily copy content between different areas, and create reusable module templates.

Choose the method that best fits your current needs and workflow to efficiently build out your course.

## Adding Content, Assignments, Discussions, and Quizzes

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The final step is typically adding content and graded items. For courses with an online component, be sure to build the course with [Regular and Substantive Interaction \(RSI\)](#) in mind. Here's a breakdown of the key components:

- **Content:** There are several types of [Content](#) that can be added to a Brightspace course, including documents, PowerPoint presentations, videos, audio files, publisher items, and external links. For creating new pages, [Brightspace offers several Document Templates](#) to help you get started. Tri-C also has several third-party tools and applications integrated into Brightspace. Review the [Accessing 3<sup>rd</sup> party Applications article](#) for more information.
- **Assignments:** [Assignments](#) require you to provide clear instructions for students to complete and submit their work. Submissions can be in various forms, such as attached files, written text, physical papers, or through in-person observations.
- **Discussions:** Use the [Discussions](#) tool to foster interaction among students. Set up forums and topics to encourage students to share their thoughts on course material, ask questions, discuss assignments, and collaborate in groups or sections.
- **Quizzes:** Brightspace categorizes all exams, tests, and quizzes under the term "[Quizzes](#)." These can include various question types, some of which can be auto-graded. You can also utilize question pools and other features to enhance your assessments.

Assignments, Discussions, and Quizzes do not need to be graded items or placed into the Gradebook. You can create and use these items as ungraded learning activities.

By incorporating these elements, you'll create a comprehensive and engaging learning experience for your students.

## Final Notes

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As emphasized in the Before You Build section, it's essential to complete the course design process before diving into Brightspace. This foundational step ensures that your content, learning activities, and assessments are thoughtfully aligned with your course learning objectives and outcomes. This alignment is crucial for creating an effective and cohesive online course.

If you have questions during your building process, please visit the [Brightspace for Faculty webpage](#) for [how-to documents](#) and [video tutorials](#) related to each of these steps. You can also reference the [Faculty Support Flowchart](#) to find the best person/team to contact for various questions.