Start Here

The “Start Here” link in your Bb course shell should be used to provide key information that will help students better navigate their distance learning experience.

Think of Start Here as the “how” complement to the “what” of your syllabus, although there is certainly overlap between the two. Your syllabus describes the objectives of the course and how it translates into a set of topics and learning activities. The Start Here equivalent describes where to find the course content (in the modules or quick access links).

In writing the Start Here content, assume that this is the students’ first online learning course, first course at UC, and first Bb exposure—even if it is their culminating course in an online degree program.

Why is Start Here important? It is important because the more quickly your students feel comfortable in their course environment, the more quickly they will be able to focus on what truly matters—the learning objectives associated with your course. As an added benefit, the more useful information you can provide in Start Here, the fewer emails and Course Q&A posts that you will need to address that are specific to Bb and course layout instead of your course material.

Your initial announcement/email to the class should welcome them and indicate that they should begin by logging into Blackboard and accessing Start Here.

Start Here topic suggestions
- Direct students to the syllabus and course information
- Describe what a module is and the module sections you will be using (i.e. lectures, assignments, etc)
- Describe that there are quick access links available to access content by category.
- Include “New to UC?” information with pointers to a few useful resources
- Include “New to Blackboard?” information with pointers to a few useful links
- Although not strictly necessary, consider reiterating information regarding how key communications will be handled, particularly:
  - Contacting the instructor
  - Posting to Course Q & A
  - Assignments
  - Discussion Board Posts

TIP
Write the Start Here section as if your students have never seen or heard of Blackboard, UC, or distance learning.