Best Practices for Mobile–Friendly Courses

Blackboard mobile™

Blackboard Mobile Learn™ is designed to provide students with instant access to their courses via mobile devices. Technically, there is nothing you need to do as an instructor to enable access to your course via Blackboard Mobile Learn; the information you publish using the Learn environment on your desktop or laptop will seamlessly integrate with the mobile environment, and vice versa. However, the following Best Practices will optimize the user experience and provide the most universal access to course materials for mobile users.

General Best Practices
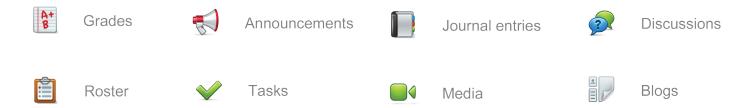
	Recommended Practice:	Things to Avoid:	Helpful Hints:
General Content	Use the "Attach file" feature in Blackboard Learn™ to attach media and documents in your course instead of embedding content with the Visual Editor.	Avoid content created in Visual Editor or HTML, which cannot be viewed from a smartphone or tablet device.	Also remember to avoid embedding HTML in the content title and description.
Media	Include MP3 Audio and MP4 video files, which will play across all devices and operating systems.	Flash.	Due to manufacturer restrictions, not all media files are accessible on all types of mobile devices. For example, Flash cannot be viewed on iOS devices.
Course Names	Create course names that are short, simple, and legible. These will be easiest to find both on Blackboard Learn and Blackboard Mobile Learn.	Remember to avoid embedding in the Course title and description so that it can be properly viewed from a mobile device.	The Course ID can contain more detailed information, such as the department and course number.
Course Management	Creating announcements, commenting on discussions/blogs/journals, and uploading unique content items from your device to the Blackboard Learn environment are the best ways to interact with your course and students using your mobile device.	We recommend that you manage your course via the Blackboard Learn environment on your desktop or laptop browser instead of your mobile device.	At this time, mobile browsers are not sophisticated enough to handle the complex navigation inherent in managing a Blackboard Learn course.

Feature–Specific Best Practices

The following Blackboard Learn features are available in the Blackboard Mobile Learn application:

Grades	Announcements	Journal entries	Discussions
Roster	Tasks	Media	Blogs

Blackboard Learn features not specified in the list above are not yet supported within the Blackboard Mobile Learn application. However, Assignments and other content items that are uploaded to the Blackboard Learn environment as documents can be viewed from mobile devices. Additionally, iOS device users (iPhone, iPad, iPod touch) have the ability to open documents in 3rd party applications, including iBooks.

Grades

Students will have access to all of their grades using the Blackboard Mobile Learn app. For the time being, we recommend that instructors continue to access the Grade Center and perform other course-management duties in the Blackboard Learn environment on your desktop or laptop browser.

Tasks

Once you add tasks into Blackboard Learn using your desktop or laptop browser, both you and your students can update their status via the Blackboard Mobile Learn app.

Announcements

Students can read Announcements on their mobile devices, providing them with instant on-the-go access to your important messages. As an instructor, you also have the ability to create Announcements using your mobile device. Just as in the desktop browser version of Blackboard Learn, only Course Instructors can create announcements using the Blackboard Mobile Learn app.

If you have an Android or BlackBerry device, you can add an announcement by going to the Announcements section of your course, hitting the Menu button on your device, and selecting "Add Announcement" in the resulting popup menu. If you have an iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch, simply use the "Add Announcement" button in the Announcements section within the app.

Discussions

We recommend breaking general discussions into a larger number of more finely-focused discussion threads. This will allow students to more easily navigate through discussions both in the desktop browser and mobile app environments. Both you and your students can read, create, and comment on discussion posts from your mobile devices.

Both you and your students also have the ability to upload attachments to discussion posts directly from certain mobile devices. This chart shows Discussion File Upload capabilities by device:

	iPhone/ iPod Touch	iPad	Android	BlackBerry	Palm
Existing Media: Choose a photo, video, or sound file that already exists on the device to upload to a discussion post	✓	✓	✓		
New Media: Take a photo, video, or sound file to upload to a discussion post	✓	✓	✓		
Files: Upload existing .doc, .pdf, .xls, and other files to a discussion post			✓		

Journals

Students can view and create journal entries from their mobile devices. As an instructor, you have the ability to view and also comment on journal entries from your mobile device. Please note that Journal prompts will not show on mobile devices.

Blogs

Both you and your students can read, create, and comment on blog posts from your mobile devices. You and your students also have the ability to upload attachments to blog posts directly from certain mobile devices. This chart shows Blog File Upload capabilities by device:

	iPhone/ iPod Touch	iPad	Android	BlackBerry	Palm
Existing Media: Choose a photo, video, or sound file that already exists on the device to upload to a blog post	✓	✓	✓		
New Media: Take a photo, video, or sound file to upload to a blog post	✓	✓	✓		
Files: Upload existing .doc, .pdf, .xls, and other files to a blog post			✓		