Highly Readable Menus in Blackboard

One of Blackboard's strengths is its frameset. The webpage look is an immediate cue to learners entering for the first time: "This looks like the Internet and I know how to navigate the web." You can take advantage of this cue to match the learners' expectation and thus launch the learning experience right away.

The left hand menu is the obvious Bb navigation means. There's also a breadcrumb display at the top of the main frame. Learners may not notice it for months. So, the feature to maximize from the start is the left-hand menu.

We recommend a stable set of menu options: some elements belong in every course. Those should be shared freely among instructors in the same program. On the next several pages are some of our favorite menu "looks" with instructions on how to create them.
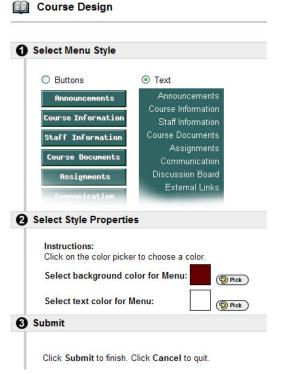
This **Maximizing Bb** *Tip Sheet* is from consultants Mary Bold and Lillian Chenoweth:

www.boldproductions.com

Mary Bold, Ph.D., CFLE   **Lillian Chenoweth**, Ph.D.
bold@marybold.com   lillian.chenoweth@gmail.com

Blackboard 6 permits the choice of "text" menu as opposed to buttons.

1. From the Bb Control Panel, select
   Settings >
   Course Design >
   Course Design (not a typo)

2. For the most compact
   (and good-looking) menu,
   select **Text** style

3. Set background and text colors.
   Select high-contrast colors.

4. Click Submit at bottom.

Order CD
Syllabus Quiz
Plagiarism Quiz
Interaction
Survey

_____

Announcements
Course Info
Calendar
Discussions
Assignments

_____

Roster
Homepage
Personal Info

Horizontal rules build in organization & white space.

1. From the Bb Control Panel, select
   Manage Course Menu
   Then **Add** a **Content Area**

Manage Course Menu

Add 📁 Content Area 📑 Tool Link 📑 Course Link ● External Link

2. To create the rule, type underscores (varying lengths)

Type   Content Area
*Name   _____ ▾
                        _____
                        Suggested maximum 18 characters.

OR other symbols such as ……….. +++++++++ ||||||||||||

Rules can also be set with a little HTML code.

Enter the HTML tag for horizontal rule (hr) along with a 6-character code for color.

00CCCC

Type	Content Area
*Name	\<hr color=00CCCC\>

Use one of the many free charts on the Internet to select color code, or use a color picker and then let software generate the code for you.

Color text can be used to highlight current items.

Right-flush text is almost never acceptable in print. But it is the default alignment in Bb menus. It effectively aligns a series of numerals.

Items #2 and #3 are bold-faced and enlarged with code (see box below). All other text is formatted through the Course Design dialog box accessed in the Control Panel.

Type	Content Area
*Name	`<b><font color=#993333>Placement - <font size=2>2`

Language=Organizer

A standard menu allows students to navigate the same way in every course. But courses are not all organized the same way.

Thus, we begin courses with standards like these at left. And then we accept that instructors will insert organizing language that suits the course:

by module,
by month,
or by topic.

Order CD
Syllabus Quiz
Plagiarism Quiz
Interaction
Survey
_____
Announcements
Course Info
Calendar
Discussions
Assignments
_____
Roster
Homepage
Personal Info
Privacy Options
My Grades
_____
HelpDesk
Tech Tips
APA Guides
Library Links
_____
Faculty
Email

Module 1
Module 2
Module 3
Mid-term Week
Module 4
Module 5
Module 6
Module 7
Final Exam

September
October
November

Discussion Board
Mid-Term Exam
Theory Notes
Applied Theory Paper
Research Synthesis

Other user-friendly menu blocks we have used

| E-mail Individuals |
| E-mail Everyone |
| E-mail a Group |

Discussions
Groups
Beta
Labs

| Dates/Deadlines |
| Dept Forms |
| Websites |
| Samples |

| GUIDELINES FOR |
| ...Family Therapy |
| ...Family Studies |
| ...ECDE |
| ...C&D |

Class Meetings
Due Dates
Syllabus
———————
Site Selection
Goal-writing
Journals/Logs
Evaluation

E-mail by Name
E-mail a Group