Back to School: Preparing Your Canvas Course

Educators should use this guide to effectively structure their Canvas courses at the start of the academic year. Similar to the way teachers arrange a physical learning space, it's equally important to prepare digital classrooms.

Home Page	Tutorials
The Home Page is the entry point into your Canvas course. It serves as a hub for access and communication. If it is well organized, it will facilitate streamlined use by students and save valuable time. Best practices include ● Introduction: Providing instructions for students to refer back to while navigating course modules. Examples of helpful instructions include items such as where to begin when navigating the course, tips for navigation, or indicating updated information on what modules students should navigate to upon entry. ● Simplicity: Maintain a clean, uncluttered layout. ● Highlight Key Info: Display important details like due dates, grading policies, and contact info. ● Update Regularly: Keep the homepage current with the latest announcements or schedule changes. ● Visuals: Uploading an image in Settings to provide a visual representation on the Course Card. This allows students to quickly recognize what course they should be entering from other courses on their main Canvas Courses page. Upload an image of your choice relevant to your course or create a customized image using Canva. ● Resource Links: Provide links to key course materials and commonly needed school resources. See the tutorials for more information.	Setting up your Canvas Homepage Uploading a header image in a Canvas course Creating a customized header using Canva

Course Navigation	Tutorials
Easy course navigation can make the learning process more effective by allowing students to access course materials, participate in discussions, submit assignments, and check their grades with ease. Better course organization can minimize confusion and frustration to allow for more instructional time. Best practices include ● Module Structure: Organize and label content by week, unit, or topic for consistency. ● Use consistent and descriptive naming conventions for modules (e.g. "Chapter 1: Pandas in the News," not just "Chapter 1") ● Instructions: Include clear directions at the start of each module, and with assignments and quizzes.	Creating and Editing Modules Using Canvas "Prerequisites"

- Material Release: Use Canvas' "Requirements" and "Prerequisites" for logical content progression. - Resources: Hyperlink related materials within your content to save students from navigating back. - Accessibility: Make all materials accessible, using Canvas' built-in accessibility checkers. - Announcements: Regularly remind students about due dates or changes; these appear on their dashboard. See the tutorials for more information.	[Posting announcements](#)

Class Communication	Tutorials
Canvas offers multiple options for class communication such as announcements, inbox conversations, discussion boards, and assignment comments. Each tool has its strengths and can be used strategically to facilitate different types of communication. Be mindful of ensuring the communication settings are set in a way that is best for your class. Best practices include: - Announcements: Using announcements to share updates, reminders, and important information with all students in your course. - Discussion Boards: These allow for asynchronous communication. You can pose questions or topics, and students can respond and interact with each other. Class expectations about the guidelines for interactions should be clear and lined out before students are given access to a discussion board assignment. - Monitor and Moderate: If students have access to discussion boards, regularly check the communication channels to guide discussions, address concerns, and ensure respectful and productive conversations. - Chat: If enabled, this allows for real-time conversation between students and teachers who are online at the same time. Be mindful when chat is turned on because students will have access to this feature outside of school hours as well. - Comments on Assignments: You can leave feedback on students' submitted work. - Regular Updates: Regularly update students on course progress, changes, and important dates. See the tutorial for more information.	[Using discussion boards in Canvas](#)