



Wrangling Content Creation Options in Blackboard



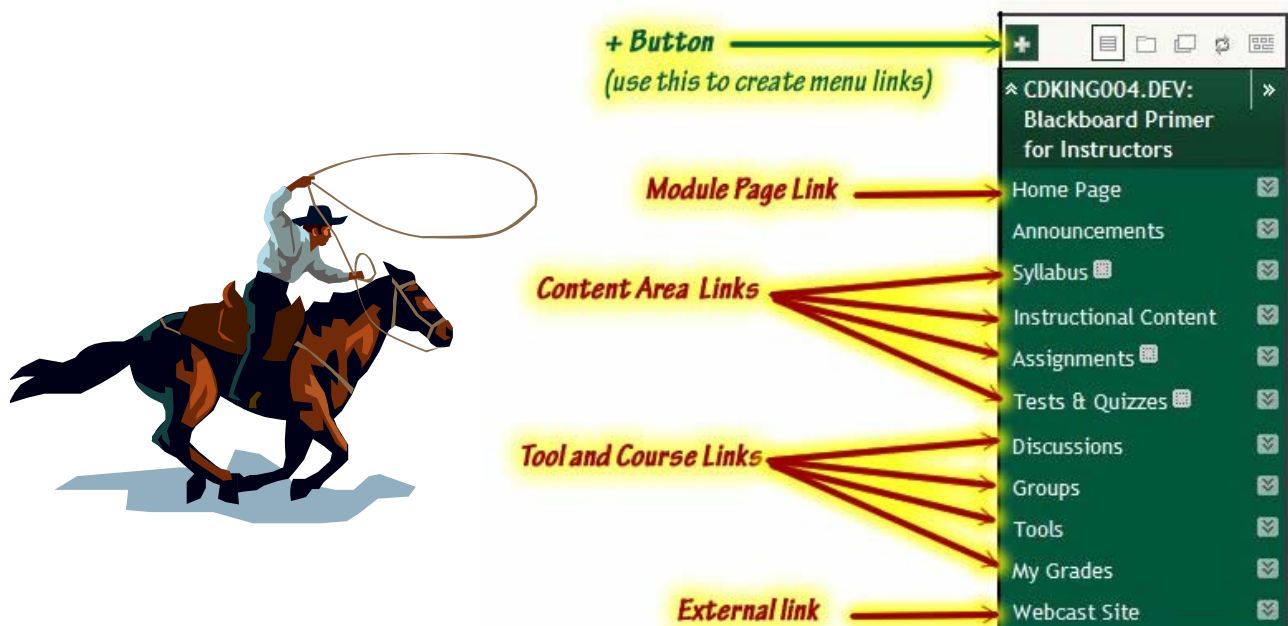
When building out a Blackboard course, it is not unusual for both new and experienced instructor-users to experience confusion over which “**Create...**” option to choose when adding a page or link to the course menu (using the “+” button), or about which “**Create...**” content option to select when adding a curriculum component (e.g. lecture note, assignment, test, etc.) to a content area page.

However, with a little bit of orientation, you should be able to differentiate between Bb’s various “**Create...**” options, understand the purpose of each, recognize their corresponding icons, and avoid future confusion.

1. Content Creation Options within the Course Menu

The course menu contains links to pages and tools within the course that students visit most frequently. Though a handful of default menu links are provided, new links can be added by clicking on the plus (+) button atop the menu, and by selecting from amongst the “**Create...**” options.

It is important to note that in most cases, the plus button does TWO things simultaneously when a “**Create...**” option is selected: 1) *it creates a link in the course menu*, and 2) *it creates a corresponding page or area within the course*.



Things that can be created with the plus button...



Content Area (page): this type of page is used to hold the majority of informational materials that comprise your course content. This includes, folders (for organizing these materials), syllabus, lecture notes, images, links to external websites, links to video content, presentations, assignments, quizzes, and tests. Content pages can hold most types of digital files including office documents, images, video, audio, PowerPoints, Flash, Camtasia, and many others. In new Blackboard shells, a default content area page entitled “Modules” is already provided for the instructor’s convenience. As with all Course Menu links, this link and its corresponding page can be renamed according to instructor preference.



Module page: this is a special type of page that acts as a course “information portal.” Instructors can populate a module page by selecting from amongst a variety of information boxes called “modules” (not to be confused with the default “Modules” folder or learning module). Typically, there is only one module page per course which, almost invariably, is the course’s landing page (a.k.a. the “Home page,” “Welcome page” or “Start Here” page). The only modification allowed to a module page is its banner along with the choice and arrangement of module boxes.

Tool link: this is just a shortcut to a specific tool within Blackboard (e.g. Discussions, Wikis or Groups). Generally, only those tools which an instructor plans to utilize are given a link within the course menu. Tool links can also be placed within Content Area Pages.

Course Link: this is simply a shortcut to a specific page or place within the course (such as a particular folder, content item, assignment, test, etc). There only function of a course is to shorten the number of clicks it takes students to reach a an item. Course links can also be placed within Content Area pages.

External Link: this is for any content that resides outside of USF’s Blackboard system on another Web server. External links are commonly used for large video files (because Blackboard generally discourages embedding them) and for information on third-party Websites.

Dividers & Headers: A divider is just a line used to visually divide the course menu into sections. A header is used to label a section in the course menu, and is not itself clickable.

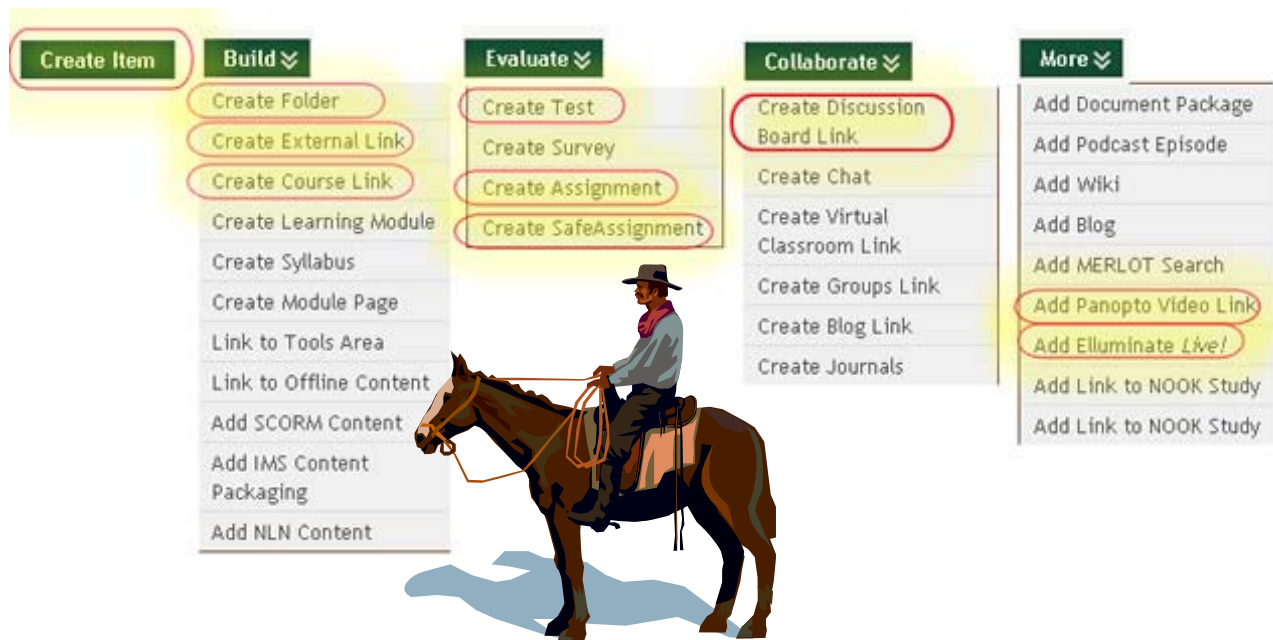
2. “Content Creation Options within Content Area Pages

When looking at a Blackboard course with **Edit Mode “ON”** an instructor can easily distinguish a content page by its tell-tale menu bar.



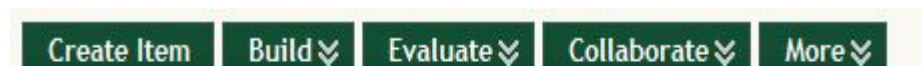
Hovering over and/or clicking on the menu bar provides a good number of content creation options. Each of these options activates a different Blackboard function which, in turn, each serves a different pedagogical purpose within the course. ***When adding a piece of content, it is important to do so using the option that most closely corresponds to the content’s intended pedagogical use.***



Instructors need only use those options that suit their curricular needs. Those highlighted below are amongst the most commonly utilized:







On the following pages, you’ll find a reference guide containing brief explanations for the most commonly used content creation options found in the green menu bar.


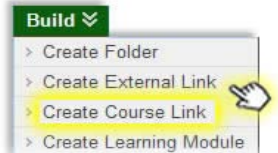
Reference for “Create...” Options on Content Pages within Blackboard






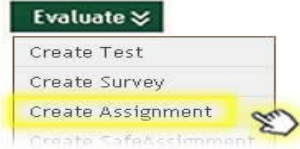
Option Name & Icon:	Create Item (often referred to as a "Content Item")	
Pedagogical Function	Simply displays / presents instructional material (i.e. viewing this content does NOT trigger any special Bb function or behavior)	
Used for:	Any informative content that is simply placed on the page for the students to view or download.	
Examples:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blocks of formatted text, PDF's • Office documents (Word, Excel, Powerpoints, Visio, Access) • Rich media (digital video, audio, Flash, Java animation files, equations) 	
NOT used for:	<i>Any Content that should have an associated Bb function or behavior (i.e. assignment, tests, surveys, discussions, groups, blogs, tools, external links etc.)</i>	
Creation method(s):	<i>From within a content area page or container page, select Create Item</i>	


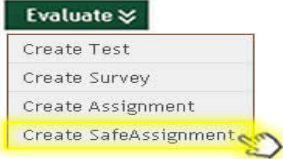
Option Name & Icon:	Create Folder	
Pedagogical Function	A container for holding, grouping, and organizing other content items	
Used for:	Holding other items and providing some visible meta-data about its contents	
Examples:	<p>A series of folders are created on a content area page in order to break the course material into logical topic areas. The folders are labeled “Module 1, Module 2, etc and beneath each folder icon/link, is text listing the topic area and module learning objectives. When students click on the link for the folder, it opens revealing the following content inside:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lecture notes, • links to external relevant videos and web articles, • supporting Powerpoint presentation, • assignment instructions with a drop-box link • link to a module quiz 	
NOT used for:	...presenting content directly. A common error, often made by instructors who are new to Bb, is to attach content to the folder itself rather than placing that content WITHIN the folder. In the real world, this would be analogous to stapling information onto the outside of a manila folder, rather than placing that information inside it. Thus, a folder's text editor should only be used to write meta-data relevant to that folder's contents.	
Creation method(s):	<i>From within a content area page or container page, select Build >> Create Folder</i>	



Option Name & Icon:	Create External Link	
Pedagogical Function	Provides linkage to relevant course content found “out on the Web”	
Used for:	Linking to external Web resources (i.e. hosted on servers outside of Blackboard)	
Examples:	<i>Links to articles on CCN’s website or videos on YouTube!</i>	
NOT used for:	Content that does NOT require linking to external content	
Creation method(s):	<i>From within a content area page or container page, select Build >> Create External Link</i>	


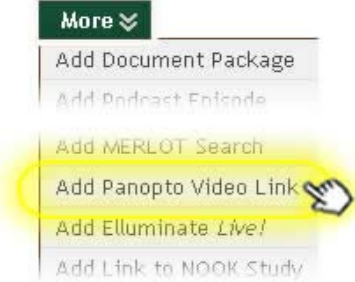
Option Name & Icon:	Create Course Link	
Pedagogical Function	Directing students where to find a referenced resource within the course	
Used for:	Creating a simple link from one area of the course to another	
Examples:	You've created a page (content area) in the course menu called "Quizzes" on which you've deployed all the quizzes for the course. However, you would also like for each topic folder to contain a link to the quiz for each topic. So you create a Course Link inside the unit folder that links to the appropriate quiz on the "Quizzes" page.	
NOT used for:	Links to content outside of Blackboard	
Creation method(s):	<i>From within a content area page or container page, select Build >> Create Course Link</i>	


Option Name & Icon:	Create Test	
Pedagogical Function	Assessment of learning	
Used for:	Creating tests and quizzes that are delivered online to students via Blackboard	
Examples:	A twenty question test that contains multiple choice, multiple answer, true-or False, matching, short-answer and essay questions.	
NOT used for:	Anything other than a test or quiz	
Creation method(s):	<i>From within a content area page or container page, select Evaluate>> Create Test</i>	

Option Name & Icon:	Create Assignment	
Pedagogical Function	Assessment of learning	
Used for:	Assignments that require students to submit something to the instructor electronically via a virtual “drop-box”	
Examples:	An assignment that requires a report saved as an MS Word document to be submitted electronically for grading (not via email, but via the Blackboard ASSIGNMENT function)	
NOT used for:	Anything that does NOT require a submission	
Creation method(s):	From within a content area page or container page, select <i>Evaluate>> Create Assignment</i>	

Option Name & Icon:	Create Safe Assign	
Pedagogical Function	Assessment of learning with academic integrity safeguard	
Used for:	Assignments that require students to write original content and in which originality is a vital consideration in grading; good for any assignment in which plagiarism is likely to be a potential problem	
Examples:	A mid-term report requiring at least 80% or more original content; a creative writing paper; an original essay	
NOT used for:	Assignments that require a great deal of quotations, references, block quotes or material otherwise gleaned from outside sources	
Creation method(s):	From within a content area page or container page, select <i>Evaluate>> Create Safe Assignment</i>	

Option Name & Icon:	Create Discussion Board Link	
Pedagogical Function	Enables student participation in class discussion and debate about course topics	
Used for:	Creating threaded discussion forums in which all members of the class can view and respond to each other’s posts (to be either graded or not graded by instruct.)	
Examples:	An assignment wherein the instructor starts a forum thread with a post containing a somewhat controversial statement, and then invites students to respond	
NOT used for:	Journal posts which are for instructors eyes-only (use journal instead)	
Creation method(s):	From within a content area page or container page, select <i>Collaborate>> Create Discussion Board Link</i>	

Option Name & Icon:	Add Panopto Video Link	
Pedagogical Function	Captures classroom lecture in digital streaming format for distance education and/or student's after-class review	
Used for:	Recording voice and video of instructor lecturing over a PowerPoint presentation or other on-screen software, along with other digital sources such as digital presenter (i.e. "Elmo")	
Examples:	A class presentation that is primarily lecture material and which utilizes additional video resources such as a PowerPoint presentation and a digital presenter	
NOT used for:	Synchronous class presentations that require substantive feedback and participation from students	
Creation method(s):	From within a content area page or container page, select More>> Add Panopto Video Link	

Option Name & Icon:	Add Elluminate Live!	
Pedagogical Function	Provides an online environment that supports live, SYNCHRONOUS presentation as well as student discussion, participation	
Used for:	Class presentations, discussions and other activities that DO require or encourage live, synchronous student feedback and participation	
Examples:	A hybrid course (part face-to-face, part distance education) wherein all students log into an Elluminate Live! session at a pre-scheduled date and time, and wherein the instructor facilitates questions and answers, lively dialog, group writing on the shared whiteboard, and an ungraded practice quiz using Elluminate's polling features.	
NOT used for:	Presentations that DO NOT require or encourage any live, student participation	
Creation method(s):	From within a content area page or container page, select More>> Add Elluminate Live!	