



Blackboard

## Communicative Tools

Communication is essential to student success and understanding and Blackboard has a number of tools to help you communicate with your professors. Below are listed a few of the most common communicative tools used by teachers and how you can utilize them to get assistance or ask questions. *Please note, a teacher may not use every single one of these tools.*

### Messages and Email

Perhaps the most fundamental communicative tools would be the Messages or Email functions of Blackboard. These options allow you to send and receive emails and messages securely to either your teacher, individual students, or groups of students.

These two tools are very similar in many ways with one major difference. Messages are an internal to your Blackboard course, and to check your messages you must log into Blackboard. On the other hand Email is partially external to Blackboard and while you can send emails from your Blackboard course, you must log into your external email (your my.morton email account by default) to check for messages.

### Announcements

The announcements tool is a great place to check for class-wide announcements, alerting you of new lessons, assignments, or educational tasks to be completed.

### Course Calendar

Another tool that has been used effectively by a number of professors at Morton College is the course calendar tool. Through this tool you can view a calendar visible to all members of the class which announces important lectures, class assignments, due dates, and events. This tool is great for helping understand how the course is arranged and can help you to plan their time accordingly to meet the deadlines and obligations of the course.

### Syllabus

Whenever entering a fully online Blackboard course, it is vital to find an entry point where you can get an overview of both the requirements and expectations of the course. A syllabus is a great place tool to achieve this end, and oftentimes is the first source where students can begin to understand what is expected of them at the outset of a course.

## The Discussion Board

In traditional classroom courses, much of the learning that takes place is done through in-class discussions between students and their teacher. In Blackboard, this still happens to be the case, except these discussions are done online through the *Discussion Board* tool rather than in the classroom. For this reason, the *Discussion Board* is heavily used in nearly every class and provides an area in which students and their teachers can discuss lessons, ask questions, and share their thoughts and opinions with others.

The *Discussion Board* essentially works like a standard online forum. To access this resource, simply click on the *Discussion Board* option in the *Course Menu*. After doing so, you will come to a screen that lists all the *Forums* available in the *Discussion Board*. *Forums* are places in which discussions on a topic or assignment are taking place. To access a *Forum*, simply click on it. After doing so, you will see a listing of the *Threads* of discussion in the *Forum* you have selected. *Threads* are the actual discussions and conversations that are taking place. To enter a thread to see what other students have posted, simply click on the title of the thread. Or to create a new thread of discussion, simply click *Create Thread*. After doing so, you will see a list of all the students who have posted their thoughts in the thread. To read what each student wrote, click on their name to display their actual words. If you would like to reply to their thoughts, click on reply. Then type in your message in the text box and click submit.