The Virtual Classroom and Chat Tools

Blackboard allows for real-time or synchronous collaboration between the instructor and students as well as among the students themselves. The two synchronous collaboration tools available in a Blackboard course are Chat and Virtual Classroom.

The Virtual classroom allows the exchange of text-based messages and well as allowing:
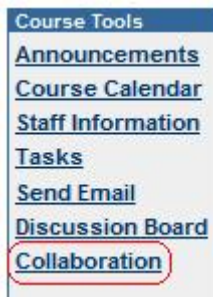
- Display content from a course to students
- Display external web sites to students
- Get students to actively participate by using a virtual whiteboard.
- Pose questions in the question inbox that instructors and students can answer at any time during the collaboration session.

The Chat tool allows the exchange of text-based messages and engagement in real-term discussions.

Both collaboration tools give you the ability to record archives that can be made available to students.

To create a virtual classroom or chat session:

1. Select the **control panel** of your course
2. Click on the **Collaboration** link in the *Course Tools* area.

   Course Tools
   Announcements
   Course Calendar
   Staff Information
   Tasks
   Send Email
   Discussion Board
   Collaboration

3. Click on the **+Collaboration Session** button in the top left hand corner of your screen.

   Collaboration Session

4. Type in a **Session Name**

   ❶ Session Name

   Session Name [   ]

5. Set the availability options.

6. Choose the collaboration tool (i.e. Chat or Virtual Classroom).

7. Click **Submit** to save your changes.

Your session is now ready to be accessed by users. The next step is to distribute the date and time information to students.

Instructors can join a chat or virtual classroom session from the control panel (via the Collaboration link). Students can join a chat or virtual classroom session by clicking on the **Communication** button it the course menu, then clicking on the **Collaboration** link. Students will see the start and end dates and times set. Once Communicating & Collaborating in Blackboard Pg 2 they are within these times, a **Join** button will appear to allow them to enter the session.

Tip:

Both the Chat session window and the Virtual Classroom session window open in new browser windows – users <u>must</u> allow pop-ups for this site, before they will be able to view and join any sessions.

The Chat Session Window
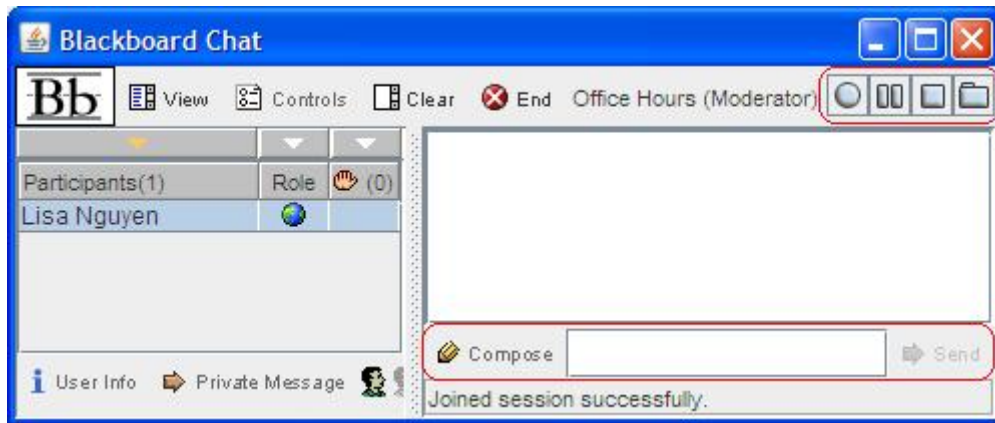
The chat session window will show the list of participants on the left hand side, and a list of all entered text (time stamped) on the right hand side. Participants simply type their text in the **Compose** textbox and click **Send** to add to the session.

The moderator (normally the instructor or TA) can record the session if desired. The **record options are in the right hand corner** of the session screen as follows (from left to right):

- Record
- Pause Recording
- Stop Recording
- Inserts a bookmark into the recording. A bookmark is a marker in the session where you can break up topics or discussions by bookmark.

Also in the top toolbar, but in the left hand corner are other sessions options which include:

- View – allows you to set private messaging options. Private messages are messages that only two participants can see, which allows students to ask the instructor a question without sending it to the entire group.

- Controls – as see in the image, this allows you to set to remove chat or private messaging options from the other participants in the chat session. You can also end the session from this window.

- Clear – allows you to clear your display or all users' displays.
- End – allows you to end the session

The Virtual Classroom Session Window
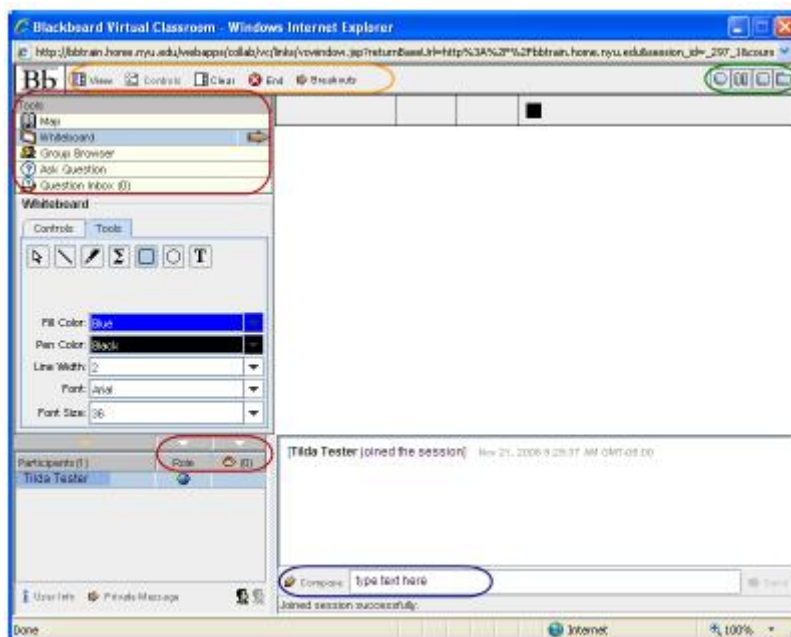
Similar to the chat session window, the Virtual Classroom session window will show the list of participants in the bottom left corner of the window and a list of all entered text (time stamped) on the right hand side.

Participants simply type their text in the **Compose** textbox and click **Send** to add to the session.

The moderator (normally the instructor or TA) can record the session if desired. The **record options are in the right hand corner** of the session screen as follows (from left to right):

- Record
- Pause Recording
- Stop Recording
- Inserts a bookmark into the recording. A bookmark is a marker in the session where you can break up topics or discussions by bookmark.

Also in the top toolbar, but in the left hand corner are other session options:
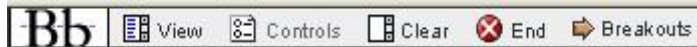
Bb | 📑 View 📇 Controls 🗔 Clear ❌ End ➡ Breakouts

- View – allows you to set private messaging options. Private messages are messages that only two participants can see, which allows students to ask the instructor a question without sending it to the entire group.
- Controls – as see in the image, this allows you to set to remove chat or private messaging options from the other participants in the chat session. You can also end the session from this window.
- Clear – allows you to clear your display or all users' displays.
- End – allows you to end the session.
- Breakouts – allows you to choose participants to send to a breakout room for group work.

Extra options that a Virtual Classroom has include:

Tools
📖 Map
📄 Whiteboard   ▶
👥 Group Browser
❓ Ask Question
📨 Question Inbox (0)
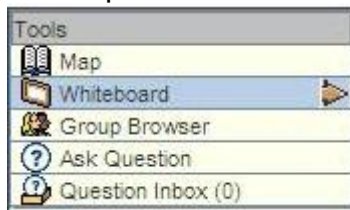
- Map - allows you to view all your Blackboard content (organized in folders) so you can find information you may want to share with users.
- Whiteboard - allows you to write in white space or mark documents you've added. The tools area allows you to select colors to mark with, etc.
- Group Browser - allows you to enter a URL in the enter address box and share the website with the group and navigate through the website for them.
- Ask Question – allows users to ask the instructor questions.
- Question Inbox - notes how many questions are waiting for you from students.