

# Best Practices for Blackboard Success (Instructors)

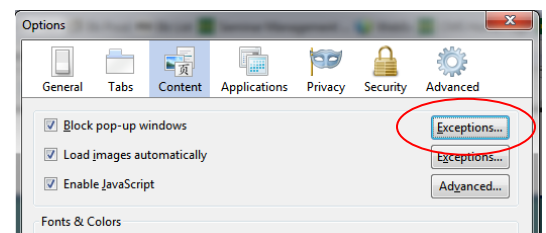
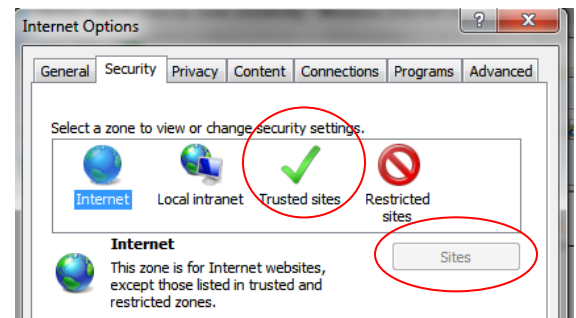
## Be careful with file names!

- **DO NOT** use special characters (# ? % \$ !@, etc.) when naming (saving) files you plan to upload to Blackboard for assignments, Safe Assignments, tests/quizzes/surveys, content items, or in the Discussion Board, Wikis, Blogs, or Journals
- Keep file names short and simple (8 – 10 characters)
- Others may not be able to open files containing special characters in the file name and/or files with long file names!
- You will have the **best** experience using a **wired Internet connection** – wireless connections cannot be guaranteed to function flawlessly!

## Important browser information/settings

- Check your browser version (Open your browser, go to **Help | About**) – Suggested Browsers:
  - Firefox – 6 or newer
  - Internet Explorer – 8, 9 or 10 (9 preferred)
  - Safari – 4, 5, or 6
  - Other browsers may work, but are not recommended
- Add Blackboard as a **trusted site** in *each* browser you use:

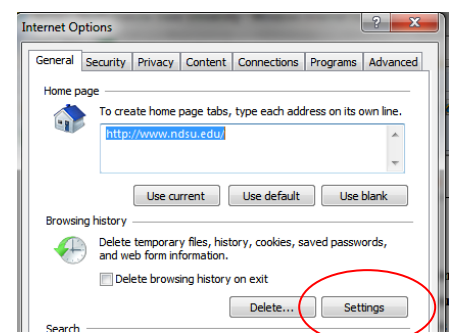
- Internet Explorer 8/9/10
  1. Click **Tools | Internet Options | Security**
  2. Click on the **"Trusted Sites"** icon, then click on the **"Sites"** button
  3. Type **https://bb.ndsu.nodak.edu** in the box provided
  4. Click **Add**, click **Close**, click **OK**
- Firefox 6 and newer
  1. Click **Tools | Options | Content**
  2. Click the **Exceptions button** next to "Block pop-up windows"
  3. Type **https://bb.ndsu.nodak.edu** in the box provided
  4. Click **Allow**, click **Close**, click **OK**



- Change settings to force the browser to reload pages from the server each time the page refreshes:

**If changes you make in the Grade Center don't seem to "stick", check these settings!**

- Internet Explorer 8/9/10
  1. Click **Tools | Internet Options | General**
  2. Under the "Browsing History" section, click the **Settings** button
  3. Select **"Every time I visit the webpage"**
  4. Click **OK**, then click **OK** again
  5. Close Internet Explorer and then reopen it before doing further work in Blackboard



- Firefox 6 and **newer**
  1. Type **about:config** in the Firefox Address Bar, then press **Enter**
  2. Scroll down the page that appears until you find the "**browser.cache.check\_doc\_frequency**" entry
  3. If the **Value** column for this item **does not** contain **1**, **right-click** on the entry, then click **Modify**
  4. Type **1** in the box provided, click **OK**
  5. Close Firefox and then reopen it before doing further work in Blackboard
- **AOL users note:**
  - AOL uses its own proprietary browser to view web pages – this browser can cause sporadic problems with Blackboard!
  - We **strongly recommend** using another browser (Internet Explorer or Firefox) to work with Blackboard

## Copying and pasting content into Blackboard

Content copied from anywhere outside of Blackboard or from a word processor – **particularly from Microsoft Word** – can cause odd problems unless you take special steps **before you paste** the content into any text box in Blackboard (content items, test question answer boxes, Discussion Board posts, etc.)

1. Copy the content from the source as you normally do
2. Open a plain text editor such as Notepad (Windows) or TextEdit (Mac) and paste the copied content into a new document
3. Copy the content from the plain text editor window, then Paste it into the Blackboard editor
4. Use the Content Editor toolbar buttons in Blackboard to add the desired formatting to the copied content

## Helpful test creation/ test-taking tips

- Post the "*Tests in Blackboard – Tips for Success!*" document available at <http://www.ndsu.edu/its/blackboard> or copy selected portions of this document into your course
- Tests with *fewer than 25 questions* can be set to show questions either "All at Once" or "One at a Time"
  - **Edit the Test Options | Test Presentation**
- Set tests with *more than 25 questions* to show "One at a Time"
  - **Edit the Test Options | Test Presentation**
- Consider creating a separate test for essay questions in order to avoid browser timeout issues
- You can use the **Multiple Attempts** option so students can re-enter a test if they get "kicked out" before completing it, but let them know how you will score the test (e.g. by using the Last Attempt, etc.)
- Recommend that students use the Firefox browser to take tests in Blackboard
- Remind students to avoid opening other windows besides Blackboard while taking the test – close ALL other applications, including Facebook, instant messaging applications, email, other browser windows, etc.
- Remind students to avoid using the Back or Forward buttons or the scroll wheel on the mouse to navigate
- Remind students to click the **Save** buttons periodically during the test to avoid browser timeout issues, but that they **must click Submit** before the test can be graded
- If "Force Completion" is on for the test, remind students NOT to exit the browser window before clicking Submit
- If "Force Completion" is on, warn students to wait for all questions to load before answering or saving the first question – they should scroll to the bottom to see if all questions are there first

## Providing test instructions to students

### Test instructions should specify:

- The test conditions allowed (e.g. whether the test is open book/open notes, whether calculators may or not be used, whether they can collaborate on the test, etc.)
- If the test is timed – indicate how much time they have to complete the test and how you will grade attempts that exceed the time limit
  - Explain that a one-minute warning timer will appear,
  - If the Auto-Submit option under “Set Timer” is set to **OFF** (the default), **students can continue to complete the test and submit it** after they have exceeded the time limit
  - If the Auto-Submit option under “Set Timer” is set to **ON**, the **test will automatically be submitted for students** immediately when the student exceeds the time limit
- Indicate how many and what kinds of questions are included (multiple choice, essay, etc.)
- If the test is password protected, let them know how to get the password and/or what it is
- The timeframe in which they can take the test
- The total points the test is worth
- Tips to avoid technical problems while taking the test
- How to contact you in case of difficulties with the test