

OWL Course Organization Checklist

Developed by the Teaching Support Centre,
Western University

Homepage

This is the landing page where students will get their first impression of your course. This page gives you the opportunity to welcome students to the course and outline expectations.

- Course number and title
- Instructor/TA name and contact information
- Instructor availability
- Preferred contact method
- Short course description
- Course level outcomes
- “Getting Started” directions**
- Use of Headers or other formatting to organize and highlight different forms of information

Optional (but recommended):

- Course calendar
- Announcements
- Course header/image
- Welcome video (might replace course image)
- Hyperlinks to syllabus or other important areas of the course

Menu Tab Selection and Organization

The menu is how students will navigate your OWL site – it needs to be clear and well organized such that students can easily access course content.

- Most frequently used tabs or tabs with important information placed at top of the menu
- Lesson/module titles clearly indicate access order (e.g., Module 1: Topic name)
- Core tools (e.g., Forum, Messages, Assignments) have not been renamed
- Only menu items that students need to see are visible to them
- Streamline tabs by merging related tabs and using subpages to organize content
- Extraneous tabs have been deleted or hidden from student view

Setting Clear Expectations

A clearly written course syllabus with well-defined course-level learning outcomes is an essential component of your course to help students know what they should be doing and when.

- Course syllabus has its own menu tab and is placed at or near the top of the tab menu
- Each lesson/module **has its own “landing page”** that includes:
 - Use of headers or other formatting to organize and highlight different forms of information on the landing page
 - Similar overall structure and formatting across each landing page
 - Title of the lesson/module
 - Start and end dates
 - Learning outcomes
 - Reading list/links to course materials housed outside of the lesson/module

- Numbered “To Do” list that outlines the order that students should engage with the course material and undertake/complete tasks (including due dates)**
- Subpages are listed in viewing order

Optional (but recommended)

- Instructor summary video or written reflection of notable ideas, issues, or concerns from the previous lesson/module that also makes connections to the current lesson/module on the landing page
- Content links, hyperlinks, or embedded content for material on landing page (e.g., readings)
- Multiple paths to work submission areas (e.g., content links to assignments or forums; assignments due dates linked to Calendar and Announcement tools)
- Messages and Announcements linked to UWO mail (if applicable)

Structuring Lessons/Modules

Organized modules divided into manageable sections allows students to easily navigate weekly course materials and engage effectively with course content.

- Each lesson/module has a “landing page” (see above)**
- Each lesson/module has a similar structure (to the extent that content allows for this)
- Lessons/modules are divided into subpages
- On the landing page, subpages are listed in viewing order
- Lesson content is organized using headings, subheadings, or other visual organizers
- Content links, hyperlinks, or embedded content for material on subpages
- Embed or make content links to any forums, assignments, or quizzes
- Pre-**set “timed release” on any applicable lesson or other course material (if applicable)**
- Use rich text editor or .CSS is to give the all lesson and subpages a common look and feel

Managing Resources

A well-managed resource folder allows for instructors keep course materials organized and streamlined for the duration of the course.

- Resources folder is not the primary tool through which students access course content
- All paths from lessons/modules and other areas of the course are up to date/working
- Each lesson/module has its own folder in Resources
- (Optional) Subfolders within lesson/modules folders that correspond with subpages
- (Optional) Folders entitled “Web links,” “PDFs,” “Videos,” etc. created to house corresponding content (may duplicate material in lesson/module folders)**
- Resources that students will not access are hidden
- Old/unused content is deleted