**OWL Organization Strategy #1**

**Use the Course Homepage**

A course homepage should welcome students, set the tone for the course, outline expectations, and convey other important information, including how students should get started with the course.

Modify the course homepage by using the Rich Text Editor. Access it using this icon at the top of the homepage. Instructions for using the Rich Text Editor are available in OWL Documentation.
Homepages differ in levels of complexity, but all should have the elements in Level One

**Level One**
- Course name and number
- Instructor/TA name and contact information
- How to contact instructor/TA and their availability
- Short course description
- Course level outcomes
- Getting Started note (i.e., first steps after signing in)
- Use of Headers/other formatting to organize homepage information

**Level Two**
- Everything in Level One
- Header image
- Course calendar
- Course announcements (if using)

**Level Three**
- Everything in Levels One and Two
- Welcome video (might also explain the purpose of the course/outcomes) with close captioning and/or downloadable script
- Hyperlinks to syllabus, calendar, or other important areas of the course
OWL ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY #2

MENU TAB SELECTION AND ORGANIZATION

Students most frequently access course content and tools in OWL using the menu tabs to the right of the page. Purposefully selecting and organizing the tabs that students see and use simplifies user experience and improves course navigation efficiency.

Course menu tabs are reorganized, hidden, made visible, or renamed by using the Site Info Tool→Managing Site Tools
TIPS FOR (RE)ORGANIZING COURSE MENU TABS

Avoiding renaming tabs during a course. Renaming and reorganizing menu tabs once the course has started can lead to learner confusion.

Regularly accessed menu tabs and those with important information should go at the top of the menu. Place the course syllabus tab at or near the top!

Merge tabs with similar information together and use subpages to organize their content, e.g., three separate tabs with assignment instructions becomes the "Useful Information About Course Assignments" tab.

Only make tabs visible if students really need to see them. For example, students don't need to see the Stastics tab. Delete or hide tabs/tools not used in the course.

Avoid renaming core tools, such as Forums, Messages, Syllabus, Assignments, Announcements. Students become accustomed to these tools in OWL. Renaming them can lead students to overlook or ignore them.

If the course lists each lesson/module by tab, make the order in which they should be accessed clear in the title, e.g., Lesson/Module 1: Why Basket Weaving?
Clear and consistent communication and course organization helps students know exactly what they should be doing in the course and when they should be doing it, helping them to achieve the course outcomes.

**Landing Page Elements:**

- title of lesson/module
- start/end dates of lesson/module
- learning outcomes
- reading list
- links to resources outside of OWL
- numbered "To Do" list of tasks and work students should complete tasks (with due dates)
- links to lesson subpages (in order of access)
- Optional: Instructor summary videos, paths to work submissions areas

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**BEFORE**

### Getting Started with Lessons

Put your content on this page by using the "Add Content" pulldown menu. The most common options are:

- **Add Text** - type text into a rich-text editor
- **Add Content Link** - upload a document or add a URL for a web site. This results in a link.
- **Embed Content on Page** - add an item that will show on the page, e.g. a Flash presentation or video.

Add Content Link and Embed Content on Page can both be used to upload a file or link to an external web page. The difference is that Add Content Link will result in a link to the item, while Embed Content on Page will put the item itself on the page. In the case of video, Embed Content will use an appropriate video player.

Once you’ve added content, you’ll find Edit buttons next to each item where you can adjust the size of multimedia objects, change titles, add descriptive text, etc. You can also use Edit to release activities and information sequentially.

### Other Things You Can Put On The Page

- **Add Assignment** - Choose an assignment from Sakai’s Assignment tool, and add it to this page.
- **Add Quiz** - Choose an assignment from Sakai’s Tests and Quizzes tool, and add it to this page.
- **Add Forum Topic** - Choose a topic from one of Sakai’s forum tools, and add it to this page.
- **Add Question** - Put a multiple choice or short answer question on the page. Multiple choice questions can be used as polls.

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**Examples**

Example 1. Sample page with Add Text, Add Quiz, Add Assignment and Add Forum. The image was inserted in the web editor in Add Text.

Example 2. Sample of a unit with several sections:
Other Tips for Setting Clear Expectations

- Manage your menu tabs (See OWL Organizational Strategies #2 resource sheet)

- The Messages and Announcement tools can be linked to students' Western email so communication happens without signing in to the course

- Include descriptions for Assignments, Forums, Wikis, etc., in multiple places, including in the area where work is submitted (e.g., Assignment submission page, top of Wiki, Forum description); lesson/module landing page; and course syllabus
Students engage most effectively with online course content when it is divided into manageable sections and presented in a variety of modalities (e.g., text, image, interactive learning object).

Use the Lessons Tool to create a course "Landing Page (see OWL Organizational Strategy #3 Resource sheet) and then divide lesson/module content into subpages.

Each subpage functions as a mini-lesson. You can:

- Use the Rich Text Editor Tool to add text and other content
- Use the Lessons Tool to add content links or embedded media such as images, videos, PDFs, or hyperlinks
- Embed or make links to any forums, assignments, or quizzes that are mentioned on a subpage

The course does not use the Lessons tool. Instead, lesson/module content is located in the Resources folder as PDF or Word documents.
TIP: Subpages must be listed in viewing order on the landing page. Otherwise, the subpage "next" button causes lesson content to appear out of order.

Use the Rich Text Editor Tool to create headings, subheadings, and other visual organizers:

- Use the “Format box” in the Rich Text Editor to choose an appropriate heading or subheading
- Other boxes allow you to create charts, align text, and embolden or italicize text

Create a consistent look and feel across each lesson/module:

- Use the same font, font sizes, and heading/subheading formatting throughout the course
- All lessons/module, forums, assignments, quizzes, etc. should indicate the order of access by including this information in their title, e.g. “Lesson 1: A Brief History of Basketry,” “Forum 2: Baskets in My Corner of the World”
- (Optional) A cascading style sheet will ensure a common look and feel across course content (the ITRC can help you!)
Examples Of OWL Sites With Cascading Style Sheets

Childhood and Adolescent Health

TABLE OF CONTENTS
Introduction
Week 1 - An Introduction to Health
Week 2 - Childhood and Adolescent Health
  Physical Health
  Social and Emotional Development
  Hot Topics: Childhood and Adolescent Health
  University Toolkit - How to Approach a Professor
  Health Science Dashboard - Managing Expectations
  References
Week 3 - University Student Health
Week 4 - Adult Health and Health Occupations
Week 5 - Health and Aging
Week 6 - Future of Health Care

What’s required this week? Watch this video to find out:

Week 2 Introductory Video

Western 1010: Learn to Succeed

* Introduction
* Transitioning Into University
* Information Security
* Campus Safety
* Health & Wellness
The Resources tool stores any file uploaded to a course (e.g., Word documents, PowerPoints, videos) and shares links to useful websites. It can also create and post HTML (web) pages and simple text documents. That’s a lot of material, and if it’s not organized, items can be very hard to find, especially when making changes later on in the course.

**How the Resources Tool Supports the Lessons Tool**

Since all files have their "home" in the Resources tool, any file that is added to a lesson/module page or course homepage is essentially a link from its home in the Resources Tool. Keeping Resources material clearly labelled, organized, and up-to-date makes it easier to find files to upload, replace, or delete. It also allows students to find information easily in the Resources tool, should they need to access it.

**Suggestions for Organizing Resource Materials**

Remember: The Resources tool should not be the primary tool through which students access course content. The Lessons tool is usually a more appropriate and efficient tool because content context and purpose can be explained and combined with other learning modalities (See OWL Organizational Strategy #4 resource sheet).

Moving a file in the Resources tool breaks its link to a lesson page, so it’s best to begin with well-organized resources to avoid needing to move them later.
Create a folder for each lesson/module in the course. Give it the same title that the lesson/module has in the menu tab (See OWL Organizational Strategy #2 resource sheet). Store all lesson/module files in that folder.

If lesson subpages have a lot of file/weblink/html type content, etc., create subfolders in your lesson/module folders. Store all content files in that folder.

If there are a lot of web links, videos, or other types of common files in the course, consider creating folders entitled “Weblinks,” “PDFs,” “Videos,” etc., so that students can easily find them without having to go back through every lesson/module.

*(Tip: It’s fine to upload the same file to more than one place in the Resources tool, just remember which file is linked to a lesson page)*

If there is content that needs to be in the course, but students don't need to see, hide it (e.g., content from a previous run of the course, answer sheets).

You can add release criteria to folders so that they are only visible to specific groups or during certain date ranges.

At the beginning and end of each semester, review the materials in Resources and delete anything that is no longer needed.