



Top 5 Canvas Settings to Help Students & Help Save Faculty Time

“When I open a professor’s CANVAS page for the first time, and it is well organized and well prepared, I feel more connected to the course. I feel the professor made the extra effort to help me so I am willing to make the extra effort for them.”

-senior student, focus group participant

Student feedback on surveys and in focus groups emphasizes the importance of Canvas organization for academic success, communication with faculty, and reducing anxiety. Faculty feedback regarding Canvas organization reveals a few simple practices and settings to proactively communicate and share resources in ways that will greatly reduce the amount of time spent emailing with students to give directions, clear up points of confusion, or correct misconceptions about assignments and grades.

1. Follow the 2-click rule

When adding content to Canvas, choose an organizational structure that allows students to connect to all information, learning activities, assignments, and grades in 2 clicks. How? Utilize ‘modules’ with ‘pages’ for ease of navigation.

2. Simplify navigation menu (list on the left of the Canvas screen)

Reduce the tools listed in the navigation menu to only those items students will be using. In a default Canvas site, a long list of tools prepopulates the menu. In the course ‘settings’ remove all tools students will not use.

3. Populate the “To Do” List

Students are enrolled in several classes, and they rely on the “To Do List” tool to remind them of assignments, activities, tests, and office hours. However, specific sections of the Canvas site must be used to populate students’ To Do Lists:

Assignments: When entering an assignment, set the Due Date.

Calendar: Add activities, tasks, or office hours to the calendar and these will appear on students’ To Do Lists.

4. Scheduled announcements

Schedule a regular Canvas announcement (at least weekly) to notify students of any upcoming work or other important information. The announcement should be on a predictable schedule and will organize communication to eliminate multiple emails throughout the week.

5. Grade book settings

Be intentional when choosing grade book settings to reflect accurate calculations of grades in your course. There are many choices for weighting grades and posting grades. Note: The standard Virginia Tech grading scale must be enabled in the “course details” section of the course ‘settings’.