

Using the Guest Role in Your Blackboard Course

OVERVIEW

The role of guest is the most limited of all course roles in Blackboard. A guest is able to view the course but not participate in any way. The instructor controls exactly what a guest sees, with the ability to enable or disable access on a very specific level. For instance, an instructor could allow her guests to see the Course Documents area while closing off the rest of the course to them.

Additionally, Blackboard protects privacy-sensitive areas, such as the gradebook and communications, by not allowing guest access there at all, either by default or by instructor choice. If an instructor wants a guest user to see those areas, he must assign a different role.

In our Blackboard, guest access is by default disabled at both the system and course levels. At the system level, this means users must have a username and password to enter Blackboard. At the course level, this means an instructor must make a conscious decision to use guest access by enrolling a user as a guest and enabling guest access in his course.

ADVANTAGES OF GUEST ACCESS

- The guest role is a great way to add additional faculty members or guest lecturers to a course to access materials without giving them the ability to make changes.
- Instructors can enable/disable guest access in many areas of a course to control exactly what guests are able to view.
- Privacy-sensitive portions of a course, such as the gradebook and communication areas, are completely closed off to guests.
- Guest users are not entered into the Blackboard gradebook.

DISADVANTAGES OF GUEST ACCESS

- Enabling guest access allows un-enrolled users to find a course in the catalog and see what content it contains. This is called Previewing. Please note, however, that previewers will not be able to access any uploaded materials (ex. Word file). An attempt to click the links to these files to open or download them will yield an access error.
- Guests can access a course at all times, even when it is set to be unavailable.

HOW TO ENABLE GUEST ACCESS

To use the guest role in your Blackboard course, do the following:

1. Enroll the user to whom you want to grant guest access and change his role to guest. (See the directions for enrolling a user and changing his role if you don't know how to do this.)

2. Enable guest access for your course as a whole: Control Panel→Settings→Guest Access.
3. Check to make sure that guest access is enabled in the specific areas of your choice: Control Panel→Manage Tools→Tool Availability→click the “Allow Guest” checkbox for any areas you want guests to see. (Make sure to click the guest checkbox for “Content Area” if you want users to see materials in Course Documents, Course Information, Assignments, External Links, etc.)
4. If you enabled guest access for content areas in step 3, you can still hide individual content areas if desired. For example, you may want your guests to see what is in Course Documents, Course Information, and External Links but not what is in the Assignments area. If so, do the following: Control Panel→Manage Course Menu→click the Modify button for the content area you want to hide from guests and uncheck the "Allow Guest access" checkbox.