



MOBILE LEARN 4.0

Recommended Practices for Mobile-Friendly Courses: Designing Course Content

2nd of 4 guides

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Recommended Practices for Mobile-Friendly Courses: Designing Course Content

Blackboard Mobile Learn™ version 4.0 is designed to provide students with instant access to their courses via their mobile devices. The recommended practices from this document will ensure the content you publish in the Blackboard Learn environment will integrate well with Mobile Learn. The following information will also create a more enjoyable student experience, providing maximum access to course materials for students on mobile devices.

Please note the terminology used throughout this guide: We refer to the Blackboard Learn desktop website as “Web Learn” and the mobile application as “Mobile Learn.”

Designing Course Content

Rich Content Support

Whether students are scanning through a course document, catching up on a discussion, or scrolling through new activity in the Dashboard – Mobile Learn is all about reading. We’ve made a lot of changes in Mobile Learn 4.0 not only to make your course content look great, but also to be readable on a mobile device.

What’s Rich Content?

The choices you make to modify and style your text on Web Learn are no longer lost on mobile devices. Rich content refers to text enhancement styles such as bold, italics, underline, etc. that you may use to make your content more expressive or robust. You can edit your text using the rich Content Editor on Web Learn when building Content Items, Discussions, Blogs & Journals, etc.

Not all rich content styles are supported in Mobile Learn. Those highlighted in the Image below are compatible in certain areas throughout the app.

Image 5. Rich Content Editor in Web Learn. Highlighted: Bold, Italics, Underline, Strikethrough, Numbering, Bullets, Insert File, Insert embedded media, Insert Mashups



Which parts of the app support rich content?

Mobile Learn supports the following types of rich content in these specific areas of the app:

Areas Where Rich Content Is Supported	Rich Content Styles
Discussion forums, Grade feedback, Tasks	LEVEL 1
	Bold, italics, underline, strike-through text, image links, and URL links
Content Items, Announcements, Blog/ Journal posts, Discussion threads and replies	LEVEL 2
	Includes Level 1 as well as headings, numeric lists, bullets, and block quotes

Mobile Friendly Practices:

Some types of rich content do not translate well on mobile and should be avoided (if possible) when creating a mobile friendly course. This type of content should be added as a PDF file. The following rich content types are not currently supported in Mobile Learn:

- Tables
- Input fields where students can enter data
- HTML and CSS customizations (these are designed for desktop browser and won't translate well to small screens)

Creating Content

Mobile Learn is designed to support the delivery of multiple types of content on mobile devices such as text documents, presentations and rich media. When attaching audio and video items to your course, please be aware that not all mobile devices can successfully open every type of audio and video file. The following file formats should be avoided when creating content for a mobile friendly course.

Mobile incompatible file formats:

- Flash formats are not supported on iOS devices
- Flash is also not supported on certain Android devices

Additionally, the quality and length of an audio or video file will greatly affect the download time required,

which is an important point to consider if your students are accessing the app with their mobile network data connection (typically slower than a wireless connection).

Courses with a large number of content items can also cause slow load times for mobile users. In order to create the best experience for students on mobile devices, we suggest limiting your courses to around 100 content items. If this is not possible, try to group your items so that they are presented across multiple Content Areas rather than placing all of your course content in a single folder. This will make your materials much easier to navigate for you and your students.

Mobile Friendly Practices:

- Avoid mobile incompatible file formats
- Be mindful of the quality and length of your audio or video files, as well as the number of content items in your course
- Be sure to break up any large blocks of text, so your content is more readable on a mobile device
- Keep in mind that anything viewed from Mobile Learn is seen from one single screen i.e. students cannot view two attachments at once; they must switch from Mobile Learn into a browser screen when opening file attachments, etc.

Uploading content on your PC—

As you build your content in Web Learn, you will attach your course files either by embedding them in the Content Editor (i.e. between text) or attaching them through the “Browse” options. Attaching your files through the “Browse” options is preferable to embedding them.

What will embedding look like on mobile?

If you choose to embed your files using the options in the Content Editor, links will appear in place of your videos or images and the actual file attachment will be placed at the bottom of the screen (see Image 6). Notice how the flower diagram image becomes a cropped and clickable image below the body of your Content Item.

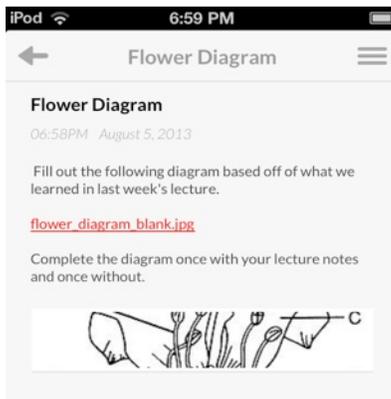
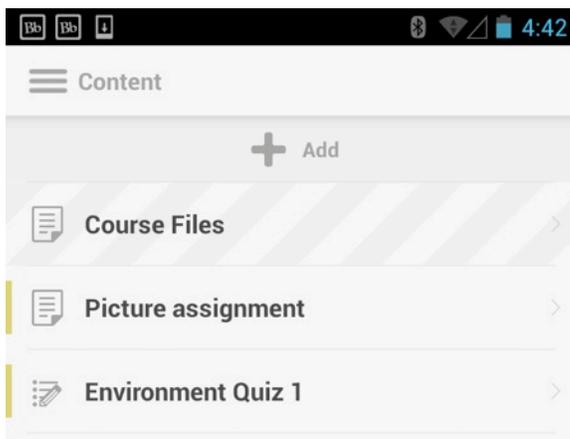


Image 6. Content Item with embedded image

Mobile Friendly Practice:

- Make it a habit (if possible) to check how your content appears on your own mobile device to make sure it's accessible and you're happy with how it displays.
- Try uploading a Content Item through your mobile device. This is a quick and easy way to add content on the go and see how your attachments will appear to your students on mobile.
 - You can do this by selecting the Add button under the Content menu and attaching files from your Dropbox account, your mobile device's file library or camera (see Image below).

Note: When adding content through your mobile device, you can only upload the 'Content Item' content type.



Recommended File Types for Attachments:

Text, Presentation and Image Formats

.PDF	.DOC or .DOCX	.PPT or .PPTX	.JPEG, .GIF, .PNG
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Audio Format

.MP3	Audio quality no more than 128kbps	Keep length short
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Video Format

.MP4	Keep video dimensions small - 320x480 recommended for phones; 640x480 for tablets	If possible, use a software that has 'presets' for producing videos specifically for mobile devices
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***Note:** There are many ways to encode MP4 files and certain encodings may be incompatible with some devices. Make sure to test your MP4 file on your mobile device's browser (i.e. Safari, Chrome, etc.) before deploying in a course.

Have feedback for making this document more useful to you? Submit your suggestions at help@blackboardmobile.com.