

5 Canvas Essentials

A Guide for Educators

Created by the Academic Commons at Thomas Jefferson University

Canvas, Jefferson's learning management system, has numerous features to help you facilitate student engagement within your course. As you get started with Canvas, utilize this guide to complete the **five essential actions** that will help you make the most of the platform.

1: Update your profile and notification settings

- **Your Canvas profile is a way to share information about yourself.**
 - ❖ We recommend that you add a photo and a short bio and update your contact information. Start by clicking the **Account** button in the dark blue Global Navigation Menu on the left.
 - Select **Profile** and click on the **Edit Profile** button in the top right to write your bio.
 - Select **Settings** from the left navigation once in your Account to edit contact information.
 - ❖ Canvas gives users full control over how, and how often, to be notified about specific course events.
 - Manage your notification preferences by clicking on the **Account** button in the dark blue Global Navigation Menu on the left, then selecting **Notifications**.
 - On this page you will notice a chart with **Course Activities** on the left and any contact information you provided on the right. Select the green icons to change your settings for each corresponding item on the left.

For more information, see the [User Settings](#) and [Notification Settings](#) videos.

2: Present course information with the Syllabus

- **Canvas automatically populates the Syllabus feature with details from the course Assignments and Modules, streamlining information for students.**
 - ❖ The Canvas Syllabus page automatically compiles a chronological list of course tasks, drawing from the course components (like Assignments, Quizzes, and Discussions) added by the instructor.
 - ❖ If your department has policies or information that must be included on course syllabi, additional information can be added to the Syllabus page.

- We recommend keeping this information as concise as possible by taking advantage of the ability to link to other documents and web pages.

For a walkthrough with step-by-step screenshots, see the [How do I use the Syllabus as an instructor?](#) guide.

3: Build Assignments directly into your course

- **Options in Canvas include Discussions, Quizzes, and Assignments that allow submission of a wide variety of file types, including Office files, hyperlinks, PDFs, and multimedia recordings.**
 - ❖ Assignments populate the course grade book and can be organized by course section or theme using Modules (e.g. a Week 1 Module with weekly readings, writing assignments, and a quiz).
 - ❖ To add Assignments to your course, use the + buttons on the Quizzes, Discussions, or Assignments pages.
 - To add a column to the grade book for an activity that doesn't require online submissions, such as an in-class quiz, use an Assignment with the submission type 'No Submission' or 'Paper'.

For more information, see the [Assignments Overview](#) video.

4: Explore grading options in Canvas

- **Canvas makes grading easy.**
 - ❖ Enter grades directly into the gradebook.
 - Easily create groupings on the Assignments index page to facilitate weighted grading.
 - Walkthrough guide: [How do I use the Gradebook?](#)
 - ❖ Create rubrics in Canvas and use them to grade submitted work.
 - Files, rubrics, and multimedia commenting options are integrated within the SpeedGrader.
 - Walkthrough guide: [How do I manage rubrics in a course?](#)
 - ❖ Provide automatic feedback for formative assessment.
 - Set up quizzes to provide automatic feedback on student responses, streamlining formative assessment.
 - Walkthrough guide: [How do I add feedback to a question in New Quizzes?](#)
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5: Remember to Publish!

- **Anything you add to your Canvas course will be invisible to your students until you change an item's status to Published.**
 - ❖ Toggle items from Published to Unpublished by using the grey **Unpublish** and green **Publish** buttons on an item's page.
 - ❖ From an index page, quickly toggle between the green checkmark (indicating a Published item) and the grey slash symbol (indicating an Unpublished one).

For a walkthrough with step-by-step screenshots, see the [How do I publish or unpublish a page as an instructor?](#) guide.

Canvas Help

- **Jefferson contracted for 24/7 live agent support for all Jefferson community members.**
 - ❖ Call the Canvas Support Hotline: (267) 666-6253
 - ❖ Chat with live with Canvas support: cases.canvaslms.com/liveagentchat
- Visit Jefferson's Canvas website: canvas.jefferson.edu
- Campus Specific Support: Available Monday – Friday 8AM – 6PM
 - ❖ Center City: Contact the Academic Commons' Educational Technology Support team at EdTech.Support@lists.jefferson.edu or call (215) 503-2830.
 - ❖ East Falls: Contact the East Falls Help Desk at EFHelpdesk@jefferson.edu or call (215) 951-4648.