

Hi

I am sending this PDF with screen examples because of what happened in the Fall term. Some students assumed that if they used Blackboard before, that the technical requirements to use it were the same or that new equipment the students had would work with Blackboard. For example, some students using unsupported browsers could not see links and quizzes. This link is meant to try to prevent that problem.

I am also providing this link because this is a “pathway” course and it is set up to help you if you follow the “path.” A “pathway” course is one of two broad types of distance learning courses that the Distance Learning Department encourages faculty to use. It is called a “pathway” course because it tries to provide a safe “path” for taking a distance learning course.

Since this course may or may not be different from what you have used before, I’m providing these tips. This is **not** a substitute for your doing WCJC’s required Course Orientation and my additional orientation to InQuizitive and to requirements for evidence, but a way:

- To avoid technical problems that students have been having
- To get you to that Orientation successfully and to help you avoid getting off the “path”

Making Sure Your Device and Browser Will Work with Blackboard and Logging into Blackboard

1. Use the “Computer Requirements” link before you login.
2. Log into Blackboard. You’ll need your Banner ID (@##### twice).
3. Do change your password.

Tip: If your browser is not listed in the lower right hand corner, then you need to try another one.

The screenshot shows the Blackboard Learn login page for Wharton County Junior College. The page includes a navigation bar with the college logo and name, a main content area with a login form, a student help desk, and additional information. The login form has fields for username and password, and a login button. The student help desk provides contact information for IT support. The additional information section includes links to various resources and a section for faculty. The page is annotated with several tips and instructions in colored boxes:

- Red box (top left):** Save this URL in case the WCJC site is down (rare) and Blackboard is still up. (Points to the address bar)
- Blue box (top right):** Tip: An 8-week course is hard. Be sure you match online learning. If you have never taken an online class, consider this useful self-test. (Points to the 'Additional Information' section)
- Red box (middle left):** Read this and this. (Points to the login form instructions)
- Blue box (bottom left):** Tip: If you are on a public computer, logout when you are done. Blackboard stays open. (Points to the login form)
- Red box (bottom center):** Use the "Computer Requirements" link before you login. Having a new device or that your device worked last term won't protect you. Your device and your current browser must match Blackboard. Students are not seeing links, not see all quiz questions, and so on. Check first! (Points to the 'Computer Requirements' link in the resources section)
- Red box (middle right):** If you need to download a browser, use these links. In general, Firefox seems safest. (Points to the 'Downloadable Resources' section)

The page also features an 'Announcements' section at the bottom.

How to Enter Your Blackboard Course and Stay on the “Path”

Once in Blackboard, enter your course by clicking on it under the Course List—and **no** other way. For example, based on student comments, students who enter through some of the shortcut methods do not even see the instructions for exams or assignments.

The screenshot shows the Blackboard interface for Wharton County Junior College. The top navigation bar includes 'My Institution', 'Courses', 'Community', and 'Services'. The user is logged in as 'Connie Bibus 329'. The main content area is divided into sections: 'Tools' (with links for Announcements, Calendar, Tasks, My Grades, Send Email, Personal Information, Goals, Browse NBC Learn, NBC Learn Playlist, Course Materials, and Course Materials Hub), 'My Announcements' (showing no announcements in the last 7 days), and 'Course List'. A blue arrow points to the 'Course List' section. A yellow callout box points to the 'Send Email' link in the Tools menu, containing the text: 'Caution: Do not use this email. Instead, email using Blackboard Messages. Messages is available on the left menu within the Blackboard Course.' A blue callout box points to the 'Course List' section, containing the text: 'For success in this “pathway” course, do this: 1. Look for your History course in the Course List. 2. Click on it. If you log in when the course first opens, the course will open with a Read Me First page that tells you what to do. If you come in later, click on Read Me First on the left menu.'

How to Go Directly to Getting Started

If you enter the course **when it opens** (and you should), Blackboard automatically displays the required items for Getting Started—including the required “introductory tasks” you must do before the date in the Course Schedule. It also covers additional steps you must do immediately within the course.

Tip: If you enter the course **late** and Blackboard displays the Home Page, click on “Read Me First” on the left menu to display this screen.

The screenshot shows the 'Read Me First' page in Blackboard. The page title is 'Read Me First' and it says 'If this item does not open automatically you can open Read Me First here'. The page content includes a 'Table of Contents' with items I through XII. A red callout box points to the 'Table of Contents' and says: 'You can click to display the Syllabus & Schedule from 2 places. Its last page is the Course Schedule—a key to doing your work on time. Print the Course Schedule and check it off as you do finish.' A blue callout box points to the 'Read Me First' item in the Table of Contents and says: 'The words and organization used in Getting Started are from the WCJC Distance Learning Department. They have given their permission for faculty to use them. (In other words, it is not plagiarism.)' A red callout box points to the 'Read Me First' item in the Table of Contents and says: 'Read Me First automatically opens on the right. It is a pdf so you can save it to your computer and leave it open until you complete each required task.' A green callout box points to the 'Read Me First' item in the Table of Contents and says: 'Read Me First covers what you do with each one.' A blue callout box points to the 'Discussion Board' and 'Messages' items in the Table of Contents and says: 'These are the two Blackboard tools you need during Getting Started.' A red callout box points to the 'Messages' link in the left navigation menu and says: 'The left menu is explained in Course Orientation.'