



Using Basic HTML

A Blackboard Learning Services Tip Sheet

Introduction By default, Blackboard will format text to 12-point, left-justified Arial. Familiarity with some simple HTML codes can help you change the font, appearance (bold or italics, for example), color and size of your text.

This tip sheet is designed for Instructors who will be building and teaching courses with the [Blackboard Learning System \(Release 6\)](#).

Basic HTML Tags and Codes

What Is HTML? The acronym **HTML** stands for HyperText Mark-up Language. It is the set of codes used to format (or "mark up") Web pages.

A single piece of HTML code is called a "tag." HTML tags are surrounded by pointed brackets (" $<$ " and " $>$ "), also known as the greater-than and less-than symbols. Tags usually come in pairs. The tags will format the text between the beginning tag and the end tag of the pair.

For example the pair of HTML tags to create bold text looks like this:

```
<B>This text will be bold.</B>
```

The `` tag means "start bold here." The end tag, ``, means "end bold here." End tags always include the forward slash (" $/$ ").

Smart Text, Plain Text, and HTML Among the options beneath almost every text box in Blackboard are three radio buttons: Smart Text, Plain Text, and HTML. These options determine the way that Blackboard will display the text that you have entered. The default option is Smart Text, and you can usually leave it at that.

Smart Text renders HTML tags, but does not require tags for line breaks or paragraph breaks. You can enter line and paragraph breaks as you desire by typing. When using Smart Text, web addresses entered in the URL format are automatically converted to links. For this to function the URL *must* begin with "`http://`" and there must be a space before the "`http://`" to distinguish it from the previous word.



Note: If an image tag, ``, is entered in Smart Text, Blackboard will automatically prompt you to upload the image. (This only works when the Blackboard document is first created; it does not work when modifying an existing document.)

Plain Text accepts your text just as you enter it. Plain Text does not render HTML codes; any HTML codes will show as text.

HTML renders *all* HTML tags. Primarily used if you are cutting and pasting HTML from another source.

Text Formatting

For visual impact, you may also wish to make some text appear bold, in italics, or underlined. You may also wish to change the color, font, and size of the text.

```
<B> . . . </B>  
    bold text
```

```
<I> . . . </I>  
    italic text
```

```
<U> . . . </U>  
    underlined text
```

```
<FONT FACE=fontstyle COLOR=fontcolor SIZE=fontsize> . . .  
</FONT>  
    formatted font
```

- The FONT tag requires that you use at least one of the modifiers (FACE, COLOR, or SIZE), but you do not need to use all of them.
- The FACE modifier can be set to any font, *but* the person viewing the page must also have that font installed on their computer. For that reason, it is best to stick to common fonts like Times New Roman, Arial, or Courier New.
- The COLOR modifier will recognize the names of basic colors, including black, white, gray, red, blue, yellow, green, purple, orange, cyan, magenta, etc.
- The SIZE modifier does not refer to typical font point sizes. In HTML fonts can be sizes 1 through 7. The default font size is 3.

Since each user can set the default font point at which their browser will display text, these font sizes can be relative. For example, one user might have their browser's default font set to 10-point Times while another has their browser's default font set to 12-point Times. The HTML tag `` would create 10-point Times text on the first computer, and 12-point on the latter, since 3 is the default size.

You can use plus or minus signs to indicate sizes relative to the default. For example:

```
<FONT SIZE=+2>Bigger, Better, Faster!</FONT>
```

would create text that is two steps larger than the default font size.

Paragraph Formatting

You may wish to break your text up into smaller pieces, to make it easier for students to read and focus on key concepts. The most common paragraph formatting tags are the line break (also known as “hard return”), and the paragraph break, which puts a single blank line between blocks of text.

```
<BR>  
line break
```

```
<P> or the combination <P> . . . </P>  
paragraph break
```

The <P> tag can either be used alone at the end of a paragraph, or as part of a pair (<P>.....</P>). If you use it as a pair, you can include an alignment modifier (such as "align=left" or "align=center" or "align=right") in the beginning tag to control placement. For example, this:

```
<P ALIGN=right>Fourscore and seven years ago, our founding father set forth upon  
this continent a new nation.</P>
```

would create a right-aligned paragraph.



Note: If you are using the Smart Text option, you do not need to add the tags for paragraph formatting.

Creating Links

Links to other websites are created using the "anchor" tag:

```
<A HREF="URL">Clickable text</A>
```

where *URL* is the Web address and "clickable text" is the text that will become the link. For example:

```
<A HREF="http://www.blackboard.com">Blackboard, Inc.</A>
```

will take the words "Blackboard, Inc." and turn them into a link that will direct the user to the Blackboard home page.

Creating HTML with Other Tools

Using Web Authoring Tools

While knowledge of basic HTML tags can be very helpful in your course development, more elaborate projects may require use of a web authoring tool. Luckily, these tools now come in many shapes, sizes, and price ranges.

For example, nearly every word processor now allows you to save your document as .html, or to publish it as a web page. There are also a wide variety of WYSIWG (What You See is What You Get) authoring tools and HTML editors available for purchase, as shareware, or as freeware.

If you do use one of these authoring tools to build your course materials, there are two ways to upload that text into Blackboard.

1. You can save the document as an HTML file and upload the HTML file itself into Blackboard (using the "Create a link to this file" option when you Add the Item). If you choose this option, Blackboard will automatically detect any images that you reference, and prompt you to upload those images.
2. You can copy and past the HTML code directly into the text-entry box in the Blackboard content-editing form. Follow these steps:
 - View the HTML source. Most tools discussed above will have a way (usually part of a View menu) to allow you to see the HTML source code.
 - Copy all of the HTML tags between *but not including* the `<BODY>` and `</BODY>` tags. Blackboard itself dynamically generates the HTML above and below the BODY tags, so you should not copy that portion of your HTML source
 - Paste the copied HTML into the text entry box in Blackboard.
 - Select "HTML" from the text-formatting options
 - Click "Submit."



Note: If there are `` tags in the code, Blackboard will prompt you to upload the appropriate images. However, if you have other media (video, audio, Flash, Shockwave Director, Authorware, etc.) embedded in your HTML page or if you have included JavaScript scripts in the `<HEAD>` portion of your document, then you will need to package your file(s) before uploading. See the "[Importing a Website](#)" Blackboard Tip Sheet for more information about that process.

To Learn More...

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