

Setting up a web log or “Blog” in edveNTure

Introduction

The blogging tool within edveNTure gives instructors and students the opportunity to create media-rich journals within a course. The tool provides the classroom community with a forum to reflect upon and constructively debate course-related topics, projects, and ideas.

Engaging students in reflective writing

Configured as a private journal, the edveNTure blog serves as a platform for reflective writing. Students can consider and explore course readings, class discussions, or field experiences. Through the journals, the instructor gains ready insight into his students' experiences in the course and can efficiently provide individualized feedback.

Facilitating learning via peer review and feedback

With the edveNTure blog configured for group access, students learn through peer review. They can view one another's posts and provide comments and suggestions. Such sharing gives students the opportunity to learn by both example and critique.

Encouraging critical thinking and creativity

Using the edveNTure blog for group or course-wide blogging fosters lively discussion of course topics and concepts. When engaged in written debate, students are motivated to sharpen their critical-thinking and rhetorical skills. They can also exercise creativity by adding images, external links, and uploaded files to their posts.

Overview of a blog

A blog, is a website that is designed to be updated frequently with new entries. The entries in a blog are usually displayed in reverse-chronological order (most-recent first). As you can see in the image below the edveNTure links are still located on the left together with the tabs across the top left.

In the centre is the working area where you can compose, edit, delete and also verify the history of blog entries.

On the right is a sidebar that allows you to check privacy settings, begin a new blog entry, print the bog page, search and determine how you will view the blog entries.

The screenshot displays the edveNTure web application interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: 'My edveNTure', 'Courses', 'Courses', and 'Community'. Below these, a sidebar on the left contains links for 'Announcements', 'Course Information', 'Staff Information', 'Course Documents', 'Assignments', 'Communication', 'Discussion Board', 'External Links', 'Tools', and 'Test and Quizzes'. The main content area shows a course titled 'Podcasting and Vodcasting: Just in Time Media for Educators and Students'. It features a 'Voice Thread' entry with a drawing of a green dinosaur. The entry includes a description of the tool and a list of users who have interacted with it. On the right, there is a sidebar with sections for 'privacy', 'actions' (new entry, print), 'filters' (show 15 entries), 'search', and a calendar for 'october 2007'.

This blog application has an easy-to-use editor that lets you quickly add content and style your work. Let's explore some of the features and learn how to set the options for your blog.

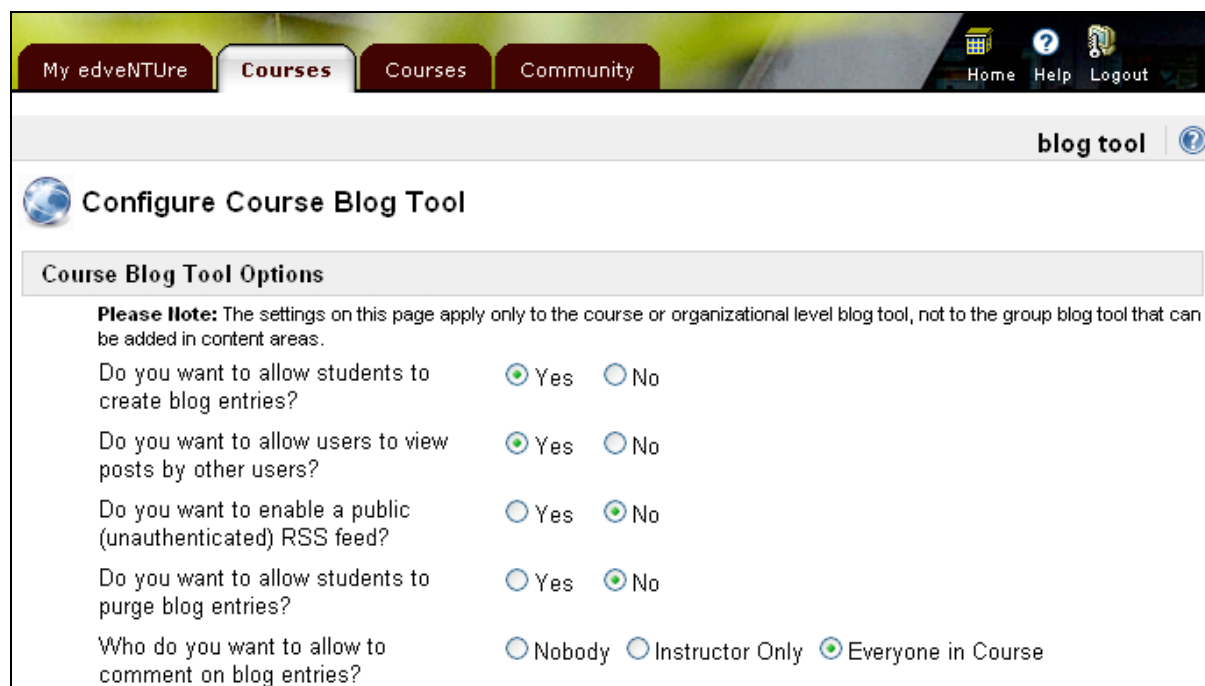
Configuring your Central Course Blog

By default, the Central Course Blog is set up such that the instructor is the only user who can edit and create pages.

To change settings for this blog, navigate to the Control Panel for your course or organization and select Configure Blog Tool. It is located in the right hand column.

Course Tools	
Announcements	My Help Desk
Course Calendar	Gradebook Export
Staff Information	Import GoChinese Grades
Tasks	Advanced Group Management
Send Email	Batch Group Management
Discussion Board	Batch Group Enrollment
Collaboration	Assignment Tool (NTU)
Digital Dropbox	Configure Blog Tool
Glossary Manager	Manage Podcast
Messages	Configure Wiki Tool
Content Collection	Assess Wikis
Course Portfolios	LAMS2 Monitor
Online Journal	LAMS2 Author
Course Objectives	Video Index (DE)
Check Collection Links	NTU Group Tool
Copy Files to Collection	SafeAssign

When you click on the link a new browser screen will appear. There are a number of configuration options. Each of the configuration options is explained below.



Configure Course Blog Tool

Course Blog Tool Options

Please Note: The settings on this page apply only to the course or organizational level blog tool, not to the group blog tool that can be added in content areas.

Do you want to allow students to create blog entries? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Do you want to allow users to view posts by other users? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Do you want to enable a public (unauthenticated) RSS feed? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Do you want to allow students to purge blog entries? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Who do you want to allow to comment on blog entries? ☐ Nobody ☐ Instructor Only ☒ Everyone in Course

Allow student to create blog entries?

Choose "No" if the instructor will be the only person posting entries. Choose "Yes" if students can post as well.

Do you want to allow users to view posts by other users?

Choose "Yes" if students should see posts created by other students. Choose "No" if students should only see their own posts.

Do you want to enable a public (unauthenticated) RSS feed?

Choose "Yes" to enable a public RSS feed for this blog. Choose "No" to disable RSS. If RSS is enabled, you will find an orange RSS button (RSS button) with the URL in the bottom right corner of the blog.

Be sure that you do not turn this feature on if there is sensitive information in the blog. If you don't know exactly what this option means, then please leave the option off.

Allow students to purge blog entries?

Choose "Yes" if students are allowed to permanently delete entries in the blog.

Who do you want to allow to comment on blog entries?

Select "Nobody" to turn off the comments function, "Instructor Only" if you will be the only person to add comments, or "Everyone in Course" if students will also participate.

The screenshot shows a web interface with a navigation bar at the top containing "My edveNTure", "Courses", "Courses", and "Community". On the right, there are links for "Home", "Help", and "Logout". The main content area contains four sections, each with a checkbox and a date/time picker:

- ☐ Allow Edits After: Oct 6 2007 7:00 PM
- ☐ Allow Edits Until: Oct 6 2007 7:00 PM
- ☐ Display After: Oct 6 2007 7:00 PM
- ☐ Display Until: Oct 6 2007 7:00 PM

Each date/time picker consists of dropdown menus for month, day, year, hour, and minute, followed by a "PM" or "AM" dropdown. A small calendar icon is visible next to each date field.

When can members post to or edit the blog?

Use the date ranges to specify when students are allowed to edit pages. By default there are no date restrictions placed on editing, if enabled.

When can other course users view the blog?

Use the date range fields to specify the time range in which students can view pages. By default there are no date restrictions placed on viewing, if viewing is enabled for the user.

How shall public references to students be displayed?

☐ User Name ☒ Person Name ☐ Both Names

Choose Alternate Language

Choose Primary Text Direction: Left to Right

Cancel

OK

How shall public references to students be displayed?

If students are posting to this blog, use this option to specify how their names will appear on the screen. If your institution includes sensitive information in usernames, do not select the "User Name" or "Both" options.

Are you using a right-to-left language?

If you are building your blog in a language that is read right-to-left, such as Arabic, you can set the primary text direction. If no option is selected, all text in the blog will be displayed left-to-right by default.

Once you have made your selections, click "OK" to save your changes. The following window will appear.

My edveNTure Courses Courses Community Home Help Logout

receipt

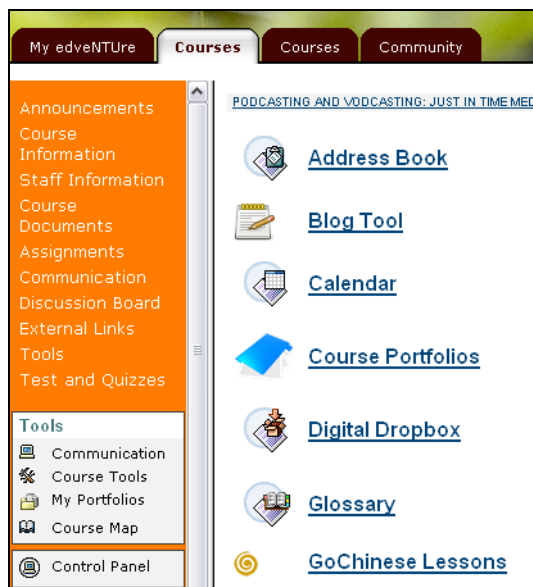
Receipt

Blog Tool Modified

OK

Features of the edveNTure Blog

You access the blog by clicking on Tools link on your course page in edveNTure.



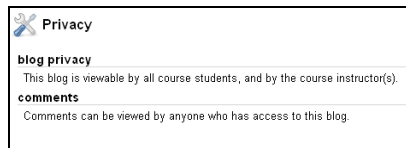
The first time you click on the Blog Tool link a window like the one illustrated below will appear however there will not be a blog entry as yet. The central area will be blank.



Let's look at each of the features in the sidebar first.

Privacy

You can check the privacy settings for your blog by clicking on that link. If you feel that you need to change the settings you can alter the settings in your Course Control Panel.



Actions

To add an entry, click the new entry link in the actions section of the grey sidebar. Once you click new entry, you will be brought to the editing pane where you can create the content for your blog entry and specify a title for it. The new entry will be created when you click "Save."

Click on Print to print the blog page. To include the comments in the printing output click on the "w/ comments" link.

Search

You can locate specific blog entries via a keyword search. Click on the search link to begin a search. A straightforward search field will appear.

Calendar View

Blog entries can be navigated using the calendar view. Any dates on which entries have been written will appear as hyperlinks. Selecting a link will display all entries created on that day. Navigate between months by selecting the month links at the bottom of the calendar.

Browse blog entries for a given date by clicking the date in the calendar.

Archives

You can browse all entries from a given month by using the archives module in grey sidebar. Choose a month to refresh the screen and view all entries created in that month.

Viewing Recent Posts

You can see a list of the most recent entries in this blog in the "recent posts" module in the grey side bar. Click on an item to jump to that entry.

You can also view the stats for your blog.

Toolbox: Exporting a Blog

Blogs can be exported and stored your computer. This allows you to browse the site offline, back up your material, or post the material to another website.

To export a blog:

1. Click on the export site link in the toolbox module in the grey sidebar.
2. Choose "Save to Disk" and select a location.

Click "export site" to save the entire blog to your computer. Save the blog within an appropriate folder or directory on your computer.

Exported sites are saved as a .zip file. To view the content, extract the zip and browse it in your web browser. Start browsing by first opening the "index.html" page.

privacy
 To see who can read what you write, [click here](#).

actions
[new entry](#)
[print \(w/ comments\)](#)

filters
 show

search
[search](#)

october 2007

s	m	t	w	t	f	s
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

[< sep](#)
[nov >](#)

archives
[october 2007 \(3\)](#)

recent posts
[voice thread](#)
[is education killing creativity?](#)
[experimenting with various audio sources](#)

stats
 views: 0
 entries: 3

toolbox
[export site](#)

Making a blog entry or “post”

To add an entry, click the new entry link in the actions section of the grey sidebar.

Once you click new entry, you will be brought to the editing pane where you can create the content for your blog entry and specify a title for it. An editing pane is illustrated below.

You simply type in a title for your blog entry or post. You can then begin typing your blog entry in the field below. It is not unlike typing in Microsoft Word. Each of the major features are described below.

The new entry will be created when you click "Save."

Editing an Entry

To edit an exiting entry in a blog, click the edit link that appears next to the entry's title.

Click "edit" next to the title of an entry to begin editing it.

The edit screen is identical to the screen for creating a new entry. It contains a graphical editor that allows users to write text, format it, add images, and add links to files or other pages.

The Graphical Editor

You can type into the editor pane or cut and paste from a web page or a Word document.

To learn your way around the editor, begin editing a page and then hold your mouse pointer over any of the buttons to see a brief explanation of the function.

Add Image Function

This allows you to insert an image directly into your entry. Within the editor, you either upload an image or provide a hyperlink to an image on another web server.

Place an image in-line in your entry by uploading from a local drive or linking to an externally-hosted image.

To insert a local image:

1. Click on the Insert Image button. It is the icon of a small tree.
2. Select the "Upload an image" option.
3. Browse to locate the image you wish to upload.
4. Enter an image description.
5. Click Upload to add the image.

To insert an external image:

1. Click on the Add Image button. It is the icon of a small tree.
2. Select the "Include an image from an external web site" option.
3. Enter the URL of the image you wish to embed in your entry.
4. Enter an image description.
5. Click Upload to add the image.

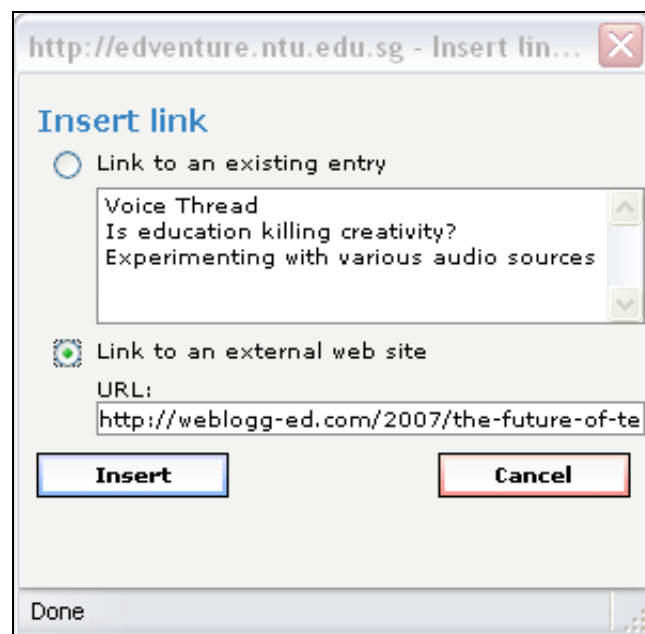
[**Note:** Inserting an external image is not recommended unless you have control over that external image. If not the original owner or webmaster may replace that image with an alternative image. They may even delete the image.]

Link Functions

This feature allows you to insert a link to another blog entry or to an external website.

To create a link within your blog:

1. Highlight the text you wish to turn into a link.
2. Click the Insert Link button, which looks like a chain link.
3. From the resulting dialog box, select the type of link you wish to add:
 - a. Link to an existing entry in the same blog (listed in the window)
 - b. Link to an external web page



Select the entry name or provide the link details and click Insert.

Uploading and Attaching a File to an Entry

To attach a file to your journal entry, edit the page and then click the Upload File button

Editing in HTML Source Mode

Documents created in the editor are converted into HTML when saved. You can view the HTML code produced by the editor by using the Toggle Mode control located on the upper right side of the editor ().

Note: This feature can be used to provide finer control of the page formatting than is possible by using the editor controls alone. This feature requires **prior** knowledge of HTML.

Save Controls

Save edits made to your page by clicking the Save button located at the bottom right of the screen. To stop editing without saving changes, click on the Cancel button.

More Functions

The Graphical Page Editor has support for many more functions such as Undo, Redo, Find, Replace, Insert Table, Full screen editing, and more. To learn your way around the editor, try experimenting! You can also hold your mouse pointer over any of the buttons to see a brief explanation of the function.

Commenting on an Entry

The comments area displays at the bottom right of each blog or journal entry. Comments are hidden until you click on the comments link. After opening and viewing the comments, you can add new ones via the Add Comment form.

Experimenting with various audio sources - [edit](#) | [history](#) | [delete](#)

Created on Saturday, 10/06/2007 8:19 PM by : John Leonard Larkin

Experimenting with various audio sources
This evening I tested four different methods for obtaining digital audio for podcasting this afternoon and I thought it would be worthwhile to simply publish the results. I used the following devices to record audio on my MacBook Pro.

Logitech Headset
Small stereo microphone
Lapel microphone
MacBook Pro built in microphone

You can see the equipment and hear the results here on my [Podcast workshop page](#). Scroll down the page.

> [Comments](#)

Deleting an Entry

Blog and journal entries can be deleted at any point.

Click "delete" next to the blog entry to delete it.

To delete an entry:

1. Click on the Delete link next to the title of the entry.
2. You will be taken to a confirmation page.
3. Choose "YES" to delete the entry and keep the version history, "PURGE" to permanently delete the entry and all of the associated history, or "NO" to cancel.
4. Confirm delete: Choose 'yes' to delete and 'purge' to remove permanently.

When you delete an entry, the existing text is replaced with a message about who deleted it and when. That message will be invisible to users who do not have the ability to edit the journal.

To delete an entry permanently, choose the purge option. Deleted entries are still visible to the blog owner(s) and can be recovered at any time by viewing the entry history and choosing the "revert" option for a previous version of the post. Select the "history" link to view and recover deleted entries.

Entry History

When an entry is saved, a record of those changes is preserved. This stored history makes three important features possible. You can:

1. Revert the page to a previous version
2. Track changes to pages as the content is being built
3. Recover deleted posts.

Click "history" next to the title of an entry to see previous revisions.

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> [Comments](#)

To access the history of a post, click on the history link next to the post title. From the next screen, you can click on the View Diff button to see earlier versions and revert back to them.



History of Voice Thread

Modified By	Date of Change	Revision	
. John Leonard Larkin	Saturday, 10/06/2007 8:29 PM	Latest (version 2)	View Diff
. John Leonard Larkin	Saturday, 10/06/2007 8:28 PM	Original (version 1)	View Diff

Page history

View the history of a page and compare revisions.

When viewing a *diff*, you'll see that changes are highlighted. New text is in green, changed text in yellow, and deleted text in stricken-through red.

Recovering Entries

Since the blog tracks each version of a page as you edit it, you can roll back to a previous version at any time by "reverting" to that version. This function is available the entry history and diff pages.

To recover a previous, or deleted, version of an entry:

1. Click on the history link next to the entry title
2. Locate the version you wish to recover and click on the View Diff button.
3. Review changes and click the Revert button.

Revert entry function

Click revert to roll back to the target version of the file. The entry you have selected will be updated and become the latest version. The history of the blog will be updated appropriately to indicate the changes made. Note that you can also recover an entry that has been deleted but not purged by following this same method.

If you return to the history, you will notice that an additional revision has been made to track your change. View the entry history with the new revision that was added when you revert.

Creating blogs and journals

This sections explains the how to create blogs or private journals within your course. These blogs are a separate from the main blog that you set up. The options allow you to create different kinds of assignments and learning activities. The most common types are:

- Private Journals
- Individual Blogs
- Group Blogs

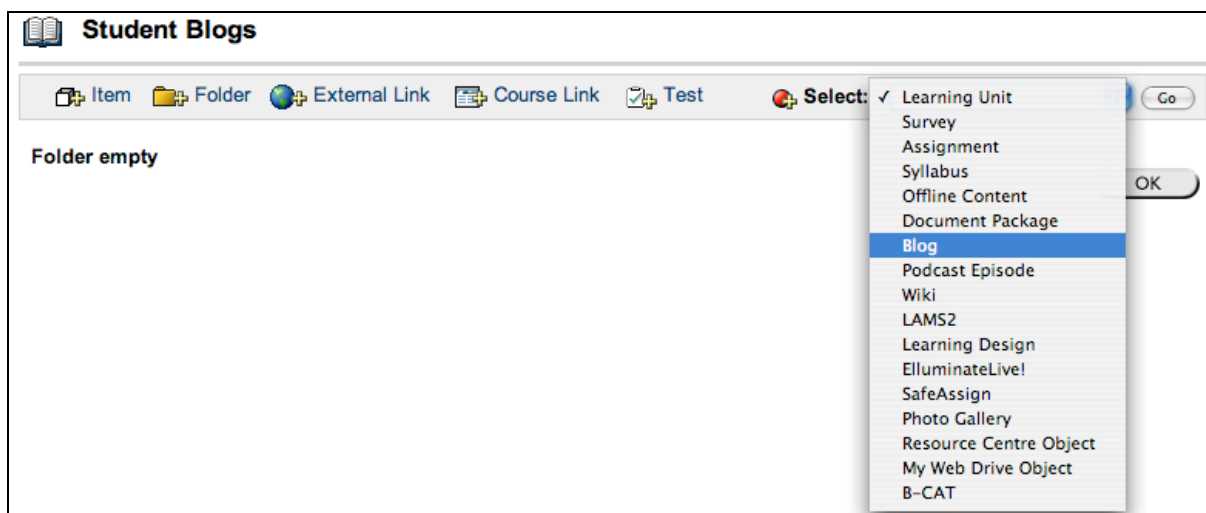
Creating a class blog

You can create a blog by adding a special kind of content type within a course or organization Content Area, such as Assignments or Course Documents.

To create a blog:

1. Access the Control Panel.
2. Choose the Content Area (i.e. Course Documents, Assignments, etc.) where you wish to create the blog.
3. Select "Blog" from the drop down list in the right corner of the action bar.
4. Click the Go button to create the blog.

The following folder was created within the **Assignments** section of a course.



Setting up the preferences for a class blog.

Configure the Blog

Step 1: Blog Information

Once you have accessed the Create Blog page, you need to complete some information to configure it.

Enter a name for your blog and briefly describe this assignment.

Give a name and description for this blog/journal assignment.

Step 2: Select Members

Next, pick the participants (or members) for this blog. This will be the list of authors who will post entries into this blog. You can mix and match individuals and existing groups or pick "All Students".

Note: The group option will only appear if groups have already been defined within the course.

Create blog - Member step

Select participants (members) for this assignment.

Note: Journals can be made individual by selecting a single user as the only team member and setting the view dates for other users to dates outside of the course duration.

Step 3: Options

The next section allows you to set various options for this blog. These options allow you to configure this blog for different types of learning activities.

Options

Do you want to make the content visible? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Do you want to allow users to view posts by other users? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Do you want to enable a public (unauthenticated) RSS feed? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Do you want to allow students to purge blog entries? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Who do you want to allow to comment on blog entries? ☐ Nobody ☐ Instructor Only ☒ Blog Member and Instructor ☐ Everyone in Course

Choose the dates and times for which group members will be allowed to edit the blog.

☐ Allow Edits After

Oct 8 2007 5:00 AM

☐ Allow Edits Until

Oct 8 2007 5:00 AM

Choose the dates and times for which non-group members will be allowed to view the blog.

☐ Display After

Oct 8 2007 5:00 AM

☐ Display Until

Oct 8 2007 5:00 AM

How shall public references to students be displayed? ☐ User Name ☒ Person Name ☐ Both Names

Configure the availability and permissions of the blog.

Do you want to make this content visible?

Choose "No" if this blog should be hidden from all students. Choose "Yes" if the link should be visible.

Do you want to allow users to view posts by other users?

Choose "Yes" if students can see other students' entries. Choose "No" if students should only see their own entries.

Do you want to enable a public (unauthenticated) RSS feed?

Choose "Yes" to enable public RSS feed for this blog. Choose "No" to disable RSS. If RSS is enabled, you will find a red RSS button (RSS button) with the URL in the bottom right corner of the blog.

Be sure that you do not turn this feature on if there is sensitive information in the blog. If you don't know exactly what this option means, then please leave the option off.

Allow students to purge blog entries?

Choose "Yes" if students are allowed to permanently delete entries in the blog.

Who do you want to allow to comment on blog entries?

Select "Nobody" to turn off the comments function, "Instructor Only" if the instructors is the only person who should add comments, or "Everyone in Course" if students can also participate.

When can members post to the blog?

Use the date ranges to specify the time range within which students can edit pages. By default there are no date restrictions placed on editing, if editing is enabled for students.

When can other course users view the blog?

Use the date ranges to specify the time range within which students can view pages. By default there are no date restrictions placed on viewing, if viewing is enabled for students.

How shall public references to students be displayed?

If students are posting to this blog, use this option to specify how their names will appear on the screen.

Note: If your institution includes sensitive information in usernames, do not select the "User Name" or "Both" option.

Step 4: Create Gradebook Entry

If the blog is being graded, select the "Create a Gradebook entry" option and specify the information for a Gradebook entry to be created for the blog. To remove this entry from the Gradebook after creating it, do so from the Gradebook.

Optionally create a grade book entry that relates to this assignment.

Step 5: Text Direction

The last step allows you to set the language options.

Choose text direction if needed (if you are using right-to-left language).

If you are building sites in a language that is read right-to-left, such as Arabic, you can set the primary text direction. If you do not select an option in this field, all text in the blog will be displayed left-to-right by default.

Once you have made your selections, click "OK" to create the blog.

Creating a Private Journal

A Private Journal is a blog which is configured as a private writing space that only an individual student and the instructor can see. You can create a Private Journal by adding and configuring a "Blog" content type within any content area in your course or organization (such as Assignments or Course Documents).

To create a Private Journal follow the directions in the Creating Blogs and Journals section and choose the following options while completing the steps:

1. When selecting members, select "All Students".
2. In the Options section, choose "No" for the "do you want to allow users to view posts by other users?" option. Consider changing other options to suit your particular usage.

Under these settings, students will only see their own entries in the journal and will be unaware that other students are posting into the same space.

The instructor can see all of the students' work in one place. To see everyone's work at once, choose "All Authors." This will chronologically display all entries by all students in the blog. If you want to view just one

student's work, use the select box on the right side of the action bar. It shows a list of all of the people who have posted in the journal, along with the number of entries they have made. To see everyone's work, choose "All Authors."

[**Note:** There is a second way to configure a private journal -- follow the instructions in the Creating an Individual Blog and use the date ranges to exclude other students in the course from seeing the entry.]

Creating an Individual Blog for *each* student

A Individual Blog is a course level blog that is owned by one student.

You can create a Individual Blog by adding and configuring a "Blog" content type within any content area in your course or organization (such as Assignments or Course Documents).

To create a **Individual Blog**, follow the directions in the Creating Blogs and Journals section and choose the following options while completing the steps:

1. When selecting members, choose just one member - the owner of the blog.
2. Be sure to select "Yes" for the "allow users to view each other's posts" option.
3. Consider changing other options to suite your particular usage.

Repeat these steps for each blog you would like to create.

Creating a Group Blog

A Group Blog is a collaborative writing space where multiple people post entries into the same blog. This is not a very common usage of blogs in general, but a more common usage in academic scenarios as it can be a valuable learning activity.

You can create a Group Blog by adding and configuring a Blog content type within any content area in your course or organization (such as Assignments or Course Documents).

Create a Group Journal

To create a Group Blog follow the directions in the Creating Blogs and Journals section and choose the following options while completing the steps:

1. When selecting members, add multiple members.
2. Be sure to select "Yes" for the "allow users to view each other's posts" option.
3. Consider changing other options to suit your particular usage.

Repeat these steps for each blog you would like to create.

Finding a Blog or Journal Site

There are a two main places where you can access a blog from within your online course or organization:

1. The Central Course Blog site is found within the Tools area of your course or organization.
2. Individual or group blog sites can be found in any content area where the instructor has created them.

Each course or organization has one Central Course Blog but can have many individual or group blog sites.
Accessing the Central Course Blog

1. Go to your course home page.
2. Click on the Tools link within the course menu.
3. Click on the Blog Tool.

Accessing Individual or Group Blogs

1. Go to your course home page.
2. Click on the content area (Course Documents, Assignments, etc.) in the course menu.
3. Browse the sub-folders, if any.
4. Click on the "View" link for a blog.