



## 🌀 Collaborate 🌀

**<https://myCourses.geneseo.edu>**

myCourses is an interactive, web-based learning management system that enables educators to manage course materials, and to communicate quickly, easily and effectively with their students. It was developed by ANGEL ([angellearning.com](http://angellearning.com)).

### **Computing & Information Technology (CIT)**

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Some of the contents were obtained with permission from the ANGEL Instructor Reference Manual.

[www.Angellearning.com](http://www.Angellearning.com)

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## CREATE A DISCUSSION FORUM:

### To Create a Discussion Forum:

1. Log into a course and click the **Course Materials** tab
2. Click the **Add Content** hyperlink
3. Click the **Discussion Forum** hyperlink.
  - a. Under the **Content** tab you can enter a **Title, Subtitle** and **Directions**
  - b. Under the **Access** tab you can enable **User Tracking** if desired. Change the viewing permissions, password and access if desired.
  - c. Under the **Post Permissions** tab, you can set specific permissions governing reading, creating and replying to posts.
  - d. Under the **Interaction** tab you can choose to have the forum be moderated, assign moderators and determine their rights.
  - e. Review other options and select as desired.
4. Click **Save** when your settings are complete.
5. The newly created discussion forum will appear both under the **Course Materials Tab** and the **Communicate Tab**.

### Post to a Discussion Forum:

Under the **Course Materials Tab** click the desired discussion forum's name or icon to open the forum on your screen. Click the **New Post** button and a **Post a New Message** window will appear. Enter a subject and body text and when you are finished, click **Save**.

### Insert Image into a Discussion Forum:

1. Click on the **Course Materials** tab.
2. Hover over an existing **Discussion Forum** and click the **Settings** link.
3. Make sure your **Advanced** settings are checked.

In the **Content** tab, in the Directions box, click **the Insert/Edit Image** icon. An Image Properties window pops up and you can browse for your image, preview and adjust it, and then click **OK**. You will see it in your **Content** tab window. Scroll down and click the **Save** button at the bottom of the page.

## CREATE A WIKI OR BLOG

A wiki is a page which allows users to edit and add content. A blog, (short for web-log) is an online journal that readers can comment on. This differs from a wiki in that only the blog's owner can edit the content, where as in a wiki anyone can edit content.

Wikis are attractive tools for team activities, shared research and peer review. They can be used to discuss and manage documents. It is a great way to express ideas and the progression of learning can be seen through entries and comments.

Blogs help build engaging online learning environments and foster collaborative learning and greater peer-to-peer and student-to-faculty communication.

In myCourses, a wiki or a blog is treated as another Course Materials item, with the same grading options as any other Course Materials item.

### To Create a Wiki or Blog

1. Click on the Course Materials Tab
2. Click the **Add Content** link followed by the **Wiki or Blog** link
3. Complete the wiki/blog setup by clicking on each tab and filling in the desired information.

### To Post to a Wiki or Blog

1. Click on the new entry link
2. Compose your wiki posting
3. Click save at the top right area of the wiki

The screenshot shows a myCourses interface for a course titled "Online Team Building Exercise". The page has a navigation bar with tabs: Course, Calendar, Lessons, Resources, Communicate, Report, Automate, and Manage. Below the navigation bar, there are links for "start page", "new entry", "search", and "help". The main content area is titled "Home" and contains a list of bullet points with questions related to team operations, such as "Communications", "Responsiveness", "Team Leadership", "Posting Results", "Absences / Participation", and "Conflict Resolution". On the right side, there is a "Timeline" section showing recent activity, including "Brad Koch - 07 Dec 2006 11:04 AM" and "Bob Jones - 07 Dec 2006 11:03 AM". At the bottom, there is a "Comments" section with a link to "add a comment" and a comment from "Bob Jones - 07 Dec 2006 11:03 AM".

Annotations from the "To Post to a Wiki or Blog" list point to the following elements in the screenshot:

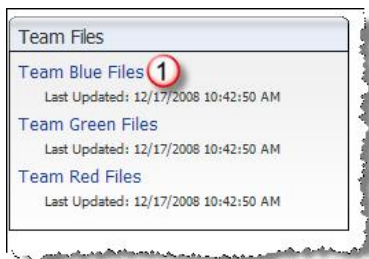
- Annotation 1 points to the "new entry" link in the navigation bar.
- Annotation 2 points to the "new entry" link in the navigation bar.
- Annotation 3 points to the "save" button in the top right area of the wiki page.

## TEAM FILE SHARING

When an instructor set up teams, there is the option to choose “enable file sharing”. When this is enabled, when students log into myCourses, they will see a section on the Communicate Tab called “Team Files” where they are able to upload, download, rename, copy, and delete files among team members.

For students to upload files

1. Click on the Communicate Tab and click the corresponding team’s name in the Team Files component

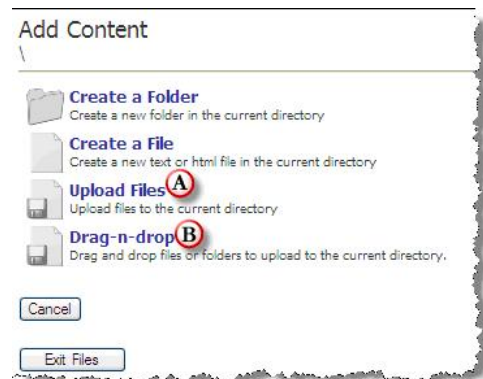
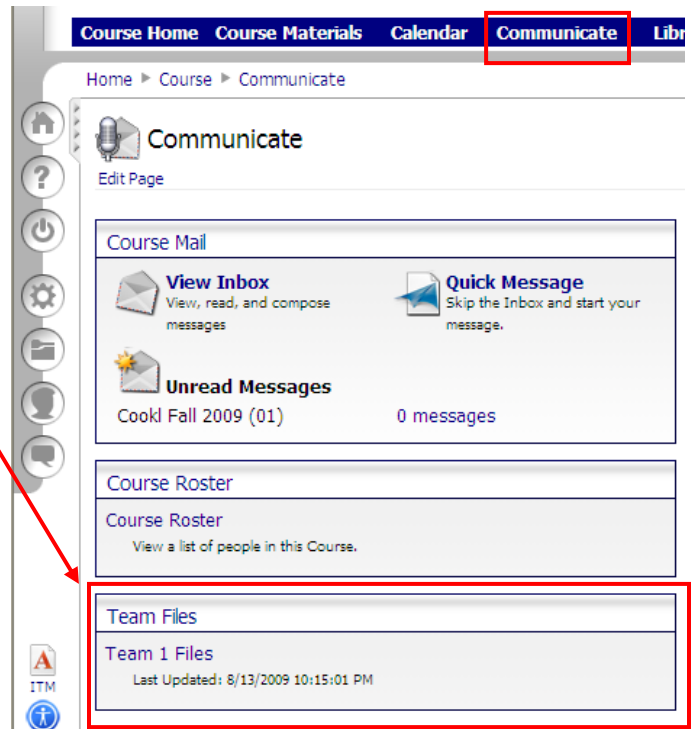


2. Click the **Add Content** hyperlink. The Add Content page displays.



- A. Click the **Upload Files** hyperlink or
- B. Click the **Drag-n-drop** hyperlink to upload files.

Note: Teams can upload an html page if they want the team file sharing area to be like a web page. In this case, when they upload files, they should copy the links that are shown. Then add those links into their web page before uploading it. The webpage should be called default.htm.



## BEST PRACTICES FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TOOLS

Make sure you have clear goals for what you want to do with the online collaborative tools and how they fit into the overall objectives of your course. You want the tools to assist you in the completion of the objectives and you want to achieve the goals you set out, not to simply be another component of the course. For instance, if you want students to create a group document or paper, or you want them to participate in a group project of some sort, it may be a very good idea to separate them into teams and utilize the Team File Sharing utility. Another example might be if your course specifically calls for students to gather and share current media information or information easily found online, the Blog is a great option for this, and could replace time-consuming, in-class presentations.

When using Discussion Boards, is it best to break a class up into teams of 4-6, as running a board with 10-20 members can get unwieldy quite fast. Managing a smaller number of people in a board makes it easier for the students to discuss topics and for you to keep track of the conversations. This would be akin to small-group discussions in a classroom setting.

Just because you utilize small- and large-group discussion in live classroom settings does not mean that you cannot or should not utilize Discussion Boards in online contexts. Today's students are generally familiar with how boards work, and some of your more reticent students might find that class participation is in fact easier for them in online contexts. What you say is who you are online, and one has more time to compose and think through utterances when posting online. Some students might be able to access the floor somewhat more easily in an online Discussion Board rather than in class.

Always model what you want students to do—so if you have discussion questions in the board, model sample answers (which means you should have true discussion questions—ones that are open-ended and able to be pulled apart). In wiki situations and blog situations, model this behavior as well by posting and responding to posts, or creating a document and then modifying the document as an example.

Evaluation is also a necessary piece as well when using collaborative learning tools. Students need to know that you are looking at what you have assigned in the online components of the course, even if it is informal evaluation or a simple interjection into the conversations in Discussion Boards, responses to posts in the Blogs, adjustments or revisions in the Wiki, or the addition of files in the File Sharing utility.

Make sure that the collaborative tools have check-in times. Students should be reminded to check into the online portions of the course at certain intervals. You might set Discussion Boards up for weekly check-in, and Blogs by numbers of posts and responses, but students will need specific parameters for collaboration online.