

# D2L NEWS PAGE - DON'T OVERLOOK IT!

## INTRODUCTION

The News window is on the Course Home page – the first thing you and all students see when entering the course. It sets the tone, and it's key to making the rest of the well-wrought elements of the course combine efficiently. Make it attractive, make it welcoming – use it throughout the course to stay in touch, and use it to create a welcome assuring students they're in good hands.

Utilize text, graphics, URL links, and attachments of all kinds, and communicate often – and use the page to post all kinds of notices, from pre-planned to spontaneous.

The screenshot shows a D2L course home page. At the top is a navigation bar with links: Content, Discussions, Dropbox, Quizzes, Grades, Classlist, More Tools, and Admin Tools. Below this is a 'News' section with a dropdown arrow. The main content area features a welcome message: 'Welcome to the course! - feel free to adapt this or just delete it!'. The message includes a greeting, course information for Nursing 000, a calendar reference, and a personal note about fishing. Below the text is a photograph of two people fishing in a pond. Further down, there are sections for 'Calendar' (showing a calendar for June 2013), 'Bookmarks' (no bookmarks added), 'Updates' (no updates), and 'Role Switch' (current role: My Role (Program Developer)).

## MAKING THE MOST OF IT

1. Learn the News tool technology – how to format text, how to set start and end dates, and how to use attachments. The News edit window has all of the same editing tools used throughout D2L, plus functionality for setting release times and adding attachments.

Just click the **News** title and then **New Item** to get started!

2. To create an inviting but also complete welcome note, include at least:

- A friendly greeting.
- An introduction of yourself, with personal notes if you like.
- Name of the course, description of its general purpose.
- Contact and office hours information.
- A line stressing the importance of checking the News page often!
- Mention of the calendar as the course's main reference point.
- Reference to the info forum in the discussions area (e.g., Ask the Instructor, Raise Your Hand).
- Instructions for entering the course ("To get started, go to the Content page and ...").



You might also use the welcome note to:

- Indicate the actual course start date (as opposed to the preview start date).
- Introduce the first lesson, suggest an ice-breaker discussion.
- Note special aspects of the course (writing-emphasis, major projects).
- Show where students come from geographically, using text, maps, or Wordles.
- Explain pre-course entry pledge and quizzes, if you use these.
- Introduce an assistant instructor or a guest lecturer students can look forward to.
- Point out early issues, i.e.: *Because we're still making small changes to the course, please do not print anything until the actual course open date.*

3. Make sure the Welcome news item is the first one students see (use the student view, through the Role Switch widget, bottom right of the Course Home page, to make sure).

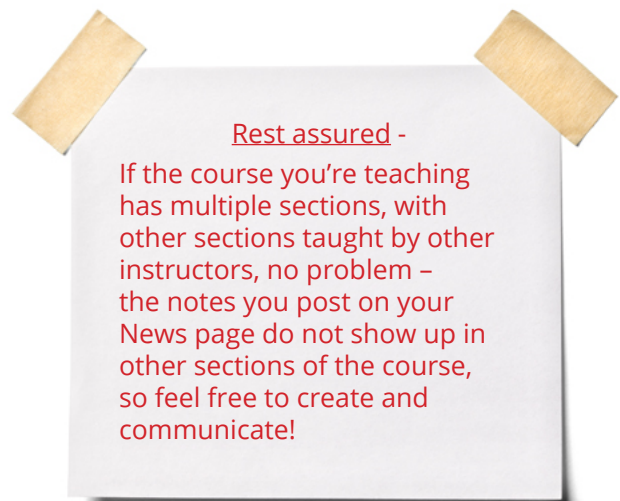
4. Keep the News page inviting. To avoid clutter, use color and formatting devices sparingly, and use end dates to remove items. (**Use end dates, not the delete function, to remove items** – once deleted, items cannot be recovered.)

## FACULTY ARE USING THE NEWS PAGE TO

- Welcome students and provide basic info for beginning course.
- Cheerlead, especially after first week, big projects, exams, half-time, etc.
- Add to lesson commentaries.
- Make last-minute changes to assignments or deadlines.
- Present catchy/suggestive graphics to spark the day/week.
- Stress the importance of discussions, etc., in the online environment.
- Warn of upcoming exam, heavy reading, survey windows, etc.
- Announce grades being posted.
- Post job opportunities.
- Announce technical issues, D2L issues, mistakes in directions or grading, etc.
- Call attention to items of special relevance (e.g., ANA Code of Ethics, APA style, Top 10 Resume Mistakes).
- Inveigh against plagiarism (with reference to program policies already spelled out in syllabus)!
- Initiate or rectify set-up of virtual meetings and groups.
- Send holiday greetings.
- Post (or post again) checklist or reminders for papers: "Remember - this is a writing emphasis course ..."
- Explain how to begin and conduct special assignments (e.g., wiki assignments).
- Post general comments on the class's performances on certain assignments.
- Post last-minute resources (audios to accompany lectures or assignments, articles, tables).
- Solicit suggestions or feedback.
- Post warning about penalties for late assignment submission.
- Connect with national events – e.g., bombings, Packers wins over Bears (but check Classlist for students from IL!).
- Note events related to important figures in the field.
- Convey congratulations to students reaching milestones or receiving honors (e.g., upcoming graduation).
- and more!



Happy early St. Patrick's Day!



Rest assured -

If the course you're teaching has multiple sections, with other sections taught by other instructors, no problem – the notes you post on your News page do not show up in other sections of the course, so feel free to create and communicate!