

A blog about archives, information technology, and related things

**Archivology**

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## CREATING A SIGN-UP SHEET IN BLACKBOARD

SEPTEMBER 12, 2010

TUTORIALS

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I'm setting up my first [Blackboard](#) course and the Build and Teach interfaces are just as clunky as I remember the Student View being. My general impression is that it just takes too much time to do things.

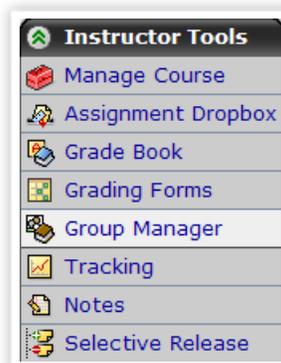
But Blackboard does offer some nice features. One assignment I'm doing involves having the students sign up to do a seminar presentation on one of the assigned readings. I considered just passing around a sign-up sheet in class, but I wanted to at least see if Blackboard offered a sign-up sheet tool.

While it doesn't have a simple sign-up tool, you can create a sign-up sheet using the Groups Manager tool. Here's how:

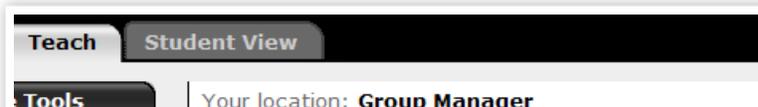
### 1. Click on the "Teach" tab.



### 2. Click on the "Group Manager" tab under Instructor Tools.

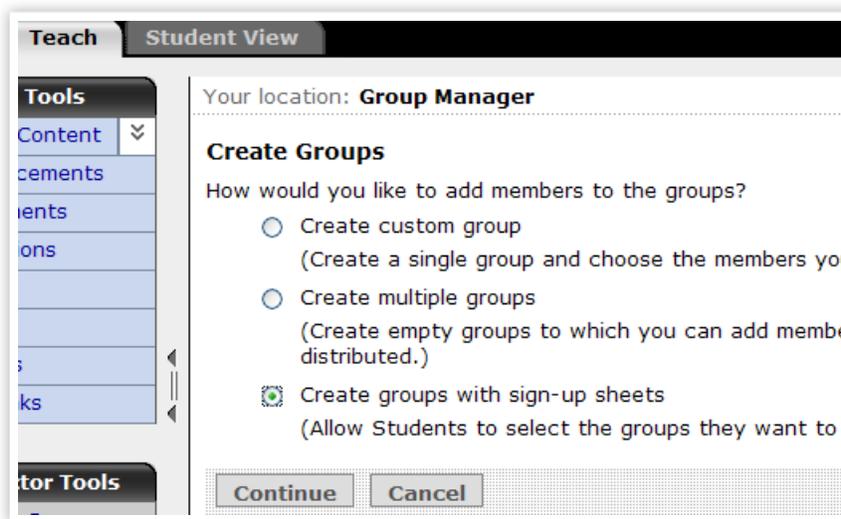


**3. This will bring you to the Group Manager screen.** If you haven't created any groups, a small window will tell you that there are currently no groups in this section.





**4. Click on the Create Groups button.** You'll be asked how you want to add members to the groups. The descriptions of the options given are a little misleading, but you'll want to click on the last option, to "Create groups with sign-up sheets."



**5. Click on the "Continue" button.** This will bring you to a form that asks you to input some questions about the groups you want to create. Some questions are required and some are optional. Let's go through each question. The form starts with a section on general Group Settings.

**6. Choose the number of groups.** This depends entirely on what you're asking students to sign up for. If the assignment is a group project, the number of groups should somewhere around the class size divided by your desired group size (e.g. a class of 30 divided into 3 person groups would require 10 blackboard groups).

**Create Groups with Sign-Up Sheets**

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**Group Settings**

All group names will start with the same word or phrase. Enter the word or phrase that will be used in all group names. For example, if you enter the phrase Chemistry Lab, the group names will be Chemistry Lab 1, Chemistry Lab 2, etc.

\*Number of groups:

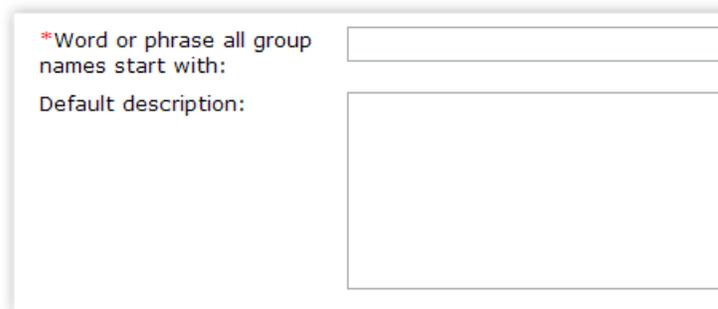
For my seminar presentation assignment, I am asking students to present individually, so I will need the same number of groups as my class size. It's a little trick, I suppose, because the group manager is supposed

to facilitate groups, not individual assignments.

**7. Give your groups a prefix and a default description.** Blackboard requires you to choose a word or phrase that all groups will start with. It then autonumbers each group with that prefix (e.g. Chemistry Lab 1, Chemistry Lab 2...). A good practice would be to use the title of the assignment. Or a date. Don't worry too much about the prefix because you'll be given an opportunity to make changes to the group names later.

The default description is optional. It's just a blurb of text that will appear under each group. If you add one, keep it short and simple. You can also use the default description to direct students to the assignment guidelines or other materials.

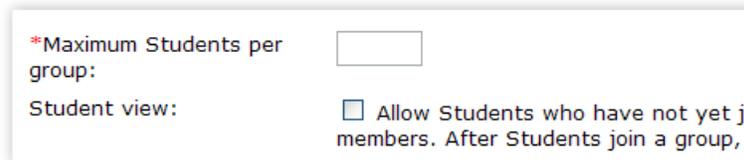
Again, you'll be given an opportunity to change these settings later (See Step 13), so if you don't know what to put yet, don't worry.



\*Word or phrase all group names start with:

Default description:

**8. Set maximum number of students per group.** This is required. Again, it depends on your needs. I set it at one. Once the group is full, Blackboard will prevent students from signing up for it.



\*Maximum Students per group:

Student view:  Allow Students who have not yet joined members. After Students join a group,

The last option in the Group Settings section is the student view. Checking the box will allow students to see who has signed up for a group before they join it. I would recommend allowing this. Hiding the members from a group until the student signs up might encourage students to sign up for topics they really want rather than sign up with people they want to work with (or avoid people they don't want to work with), but it seems a little misguided to try and use the online sign-up sheet to address those issues. Traditional sign-up sheets reveal names in groups and it seems reasonable to have a Blackboard sign-up sheet work in the same way.

That's the last of the general group settings. There are just a few sign-up sheet settings to make.

**9. Give the sign-up sheet a title.** This is required. Keep it simple. Remember, you're creating one sign-up sheet that will have links to all the groups you created. I just used the assignment title again, but I added

“Sign-Up Sheet” to it to make it clear that the link students see is the sign-up sheet.

**Sign-Up Sheet Settings**

Students join a group by clicking a sign-up sheet, which is placed in a folder.

\*Sign-up sheet title:

**10. Enter sign-up sheet instructions.** This is optional. Again, if you add instructions, keep them short and simple. A one-sentence instruction telling students to sign up for the group of their choice should be sufficient.

Sign-up sheet instructions:

Place the sign-up sheet link on: - Select -

This is where the Students will go to c

**11. Choose where you will link to the sign-up sheet.** The sign-up sheet will end up being a linkable object in Blackboard. You can add it to the course home page if you want, but if you created Course Content folders, those folders will also appear in the drop down menu. I added my link to the Course Content folder I set up for Week One. This is also where I refer to the sign-up sheet in the course syllabus.

**12. Click on the “Continue” button.** This will bring you a screen to confirm the groups you created.

**13. Confirm the groups you just created.** On this screen, you can change the group name and description you entered in Step 7. This is helpful because it lets you see the list of groups as they will appear on the sign-up sheet.

**Confirm Created Groups**

**Sign-up sheet title:** Seminar Presentation Sign-Up Sheet

**Sign-up sheet instructions:** Sign up for the reading you would like to do your

**Group total:**

Edit groups titles and descriptions if desired:

	Group Name	Description
1 *	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>

I realized when I got to this step that rather than use a default description for each group, I wanted to use the citations for the readings I am asking students to sign up for. I also wanted to add a date to the group title. I just copied the citations off the Course Schedule and pasted them into each description. So I wound up describing each group with a generic group name (e.g. Seminar Presentation January 24, 2011) and the

reading the students were signing up for.

Of course, you can always go back and manually edit each group if you don't like the appearance.

That's it! Once you click on the "Continue" button, you'll be brought back to the Group Manager, where you should see all the groups you created under that sign-up sheet.

Your location: **Group Manager**

**Group Manager**

**Create Groups**

<input type="checkbox"/> Group Name ↑	Sign-Up Sheet Title	Description	Men
<input type="checkbox"/> Seminar Presentation - January 24, 2011 ⌵	Seminar Presentation Sign-Up Sheet	Ericson, Timothy L. "At the 'Rim of Creative Dissatisfaction': Archivists and Acquisition Development." Archivaria 33 (Winter 1991-1992): 66-77.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Seminar Presentation - January 31, 2011 ⌵	Seminar Presentation Sign-Up Sheet	Bailey, Catherine. "From the Top Down: The Practice of Macro-Appraisal." Archivaria 43 (Spring 1997): 89 -128.	

**14. Check for errors, make edits.** It's a good idea to check over the groups for spelling mistakes, incorrect dates, etc. Remember, you can only make changes to the groups in "Teach" view. In Group Manager, each group will have a drop down button that allows you to edit the group, edit the sign-up sheet, send an email, or delete the group.

<input type="checkbox"/> Group Name ↑	Sign-U
<input type="checkbox"/> Seminar Presentation - January 24, 2011 ⌵	Semina Sign-U
<input type="checkbox"/> Seminar Presentation - January 31, 2011	Semina Sign-U

-  Edit Group
-  Edit Sign-Up Sheet
-  Send Mail
-  Delete

If you want to add groups to a sign-up sheet, just click on the "Edit Sign-Up Sheet" button and add the group there.

**15. View groups in Student View.** I find it really helpful to view everything in Student View. It's another way to check for mistakes and it lets you see everything as it's intended. First, you'll want to go to the folder

that you linked the sign-up sheet to. You should see a link with an icon. If you added instructions in Step 10, they will also appear.



[Seminar Presentation Sign-Up Sheet](#)  
Sign up for the reading you would like to do your seminar presentation

Click on the link to view the sign-up sheet.

**Seminar Presentation Sign-Up Sheet**

**Sign up for the reading you would like to do your seminar presentation**

Group Name 	Description	Maximum Members
Seminar Presentation - January 24, 2011	Ericson, Timothy L. "At the 'Rim of Creative Dissatisfaction': Archivists and Acquisition Development." <i>Archivaria</i> 33 (Winter 1991-1992): 66-77.	1

You can see the title of the Sign-Up Sheet, the instructions, the “group name,” and the description of each group. On the right, there is a button for students to click on and sign up for the group of their choice.

Sign Up for Group

Sign Up

So that’s that. The Group Manager may not have been intended to create a sign-up sheet for individual assignments like this, but this will certainly work for our course.

Unfortunately, you can’t add links to groups. Or I can’t figure out how to, at least. I would have liked to link each group to the reading’s Web Link, but there doesn’t seem to be a way to do that. I also wanted to link the Assignment description to the Sign-Up Sheet, but there doesn’t seem to be a way to do that either.

*(thanks to [Erick Hilbert](#) for the [heads up](#) on this!)*