



Blackboard Best Practices: Importing a Web Site into Blackboard

A Blackboard Learning Services Tip Sheet

Introduction

You may want to upload a Web site into Blackboard if:

- You have previously created a Web-based lesson or activity that you want to incorporate into your Blackboard course.
- You have converted a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation (or other proprietarily formatted file) to HTML so you can deliver it to your students without worrying about whether they have the proprietary application on their computer to enable them to view it.
- You want to incorporate Java applets, JavaScript programs, Dynamic HTML, Cascading Style Sheets, or other advanced Web technologies into your Blackboard course.

By compressing the Web site into a single file, then instructing Blackboard to unpackage it after it has been uploaded, you can upload your entire Web site into Blackboard in a way that retains the internal structure of the Web site.

Preparing the Web Site

To most effectively import your Web site into Blackboard you should make sure your Web site meets a few criteria:

1. **In your Web site, use relative URLs instead of fixed URLs for internal links.** Fixed links include the server's domain name as part of the link. For example, the HTML to create a fixed link might look like this:

```
<A HREF="http://domain.name.com/docs/intro/special.html">Click here</A>
```

While a relative link might look like this:

```
<A HREF="docs/intro/special.html">Click here</A>
```

The difference is that the fixed link limits the Web site to functioning on a particular server ("domain.name.com" in our example). A relative link allows the Web site to function no matter what server it is placed on.

This is only the case for internal links -- when you link from one location in your Web site to another location in your Web site. External links (linking to other Web sites outside of yours) always need to be fixed links.

If you are using a Web authoring tool (i.e., Microsoft Front Page 2000, Macromedia Dreamweaver), you will probably have an option or preference that allows you to determine whether they generate fixed or relative links. Refer to the documentation for your Web-authoring tool.

2. **Put the entire Web site in one directory.** That one directory can have sub-directories with files inside them, of course, but all the files and sub-directories need to be under one directory to facilitate the compression process.
3. **Move the Web site to your local computer.** If the Web site is on a remote Web server and you do not have a local copy of it, you will need to create a copy of it on your local computer.
4. **Know the entry point to your Web site.** The entry point (perhaps more commonly known as the site's "home page") is usually named something like *index.html* or *default.htm*. Those are standard naming

conventions, but they are not requirements. Your entry point could be named anything. Before uploading the Web site into Blackboard, you need to make sure you know the name of the HTML file that will be the site's entry point.

Compressing the Web Site

The Web site has to be compressed in one of these formats: **zip**, **gzip**, or **tar**. The tar and gzip formats are primarily used only on UNIX or Linux computers. The zip format is standard on all Microsoft Windows computers and can also be used on Apple Macintosh computers. We will only deal with the zip format here.

(Note: Iomega makes a kind of disk drive called a Zip drive. That is merely a brand name and is in no way related to the zip archive file format.)

There are many utilities that you can use to create zip archives. On Windows, the most common is WinZip. On Macintosh, Aladdin Systems' StuffIt Deluxe is the most popular compression tool. You will need to download and/or purchase this software. There are many that you can choose from in addition to those listed above, some of which are free or shareware.

The procedure for creating the zip archive file will vary depending upon the compression utility that you choose. Refer to the documentation for your compression utility to learn how to operate that particular program. There are just a couple of key options that you want:

- the compression tool should retain the directory structure
- the compression tool saves to the .zip format

After you have selected the compression utility that suits your needs and set the options, *compress the entire directory* that contains the Web site you wish to incorporate into Blackboard. This should result in a single file with a name that ends in **.zip**

WinZip, the most popular compression tool for Windows computers, makes it very simple. When WinZip is installed, it adds commands to the context-sensitive menus (the menus that pop-up when you right-click on something). On Windows computers with WinZip follow these steps to create the zip archive that contains your Web site:

1. Right-click *on the folder* containing your Web site (see Step 2 in the previous section).
2. Select "Add to *filename*.zip" where *filename* is the name of the folder.

Importing the Compressed File

Preparing the Web site and zipping it are the most complex steps. Once you have created the zip archive, bringing it into Blackboard is simple.

1. Create a new item in one of the primary content areas (Course Information, Course Documents, Assignments, or Books).
2. Under the "Item Attachments" section, click on the **Browse** button and locate the zip archive on your local computer.
3. For *Name of Link to File*, enter the text your students will click on to launch the Web site.
4. For *Special Actions*, select **Unpackage these files** from the drop-down menu. This instructs Blackboard to unpackage the archived file and rebuild the Web site on the Blackboard server.
5. Set any other options you desire, and click the **Submit** button.

6. You will be prompted with a follow-up form to select the entry point. Select the file that will be the entry point for your Web site, and click the **Submit** button.

Editing a Compressed File

Once you have imported the Web site into Blackboard you cannot edit it directly. If you need to make changes to that Web site, make the changes to the copy on your local computer. You will then have to delete the Blackboard document with the imported Web site, and replace it with a new Blackboard document, re-importing the Web site when creating the new document.

Compression Utilities

Here are some common utilities for creating zip archives.

Windows Compression Utilities

Winzip (<http://www.winzip.com/>)

Pkzip (<http://www.pkware.com/>)

CuteZip (<http://www.globalscape.com/>)

Macintosh Compression Utilities

StuffIt Deluxe (<http://www.aladdinsys.com/>)

DropStuff (<http://www.aladdinsys.com/>)

ZipIt (<http://www.maczipit.com/>)

Education Opportunities

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