



## I. Introduction

The sectioning tool is a course management utility designed to help faculty and staff manage the assignment of students into course sections, including:

- Precepts
- Drills
- Ear trainings
- Films
- Classes (related to a lecture or seminar) – at the request of the department
- Labs (related to a lecture or seminar) – at the request of the department

There are two means of assigning students to sections via the Blackboard Sectioning Tool: Automatic sorting based on preferences expressed by students through the “Student Preference Tool,” or manual sorting. These methods will be discussed in Sections IV and V of this brochure.

In addition to the sorting capabilities of the sectioning tool, its interface with Blackboard provides the means for those with Blackboard course roles of instructor, TA, and course builder to communicate with respective section members via e-mail, as a single group. Only one user is permitted to use the sectioning tool for a particular course at a time.

## II. Creating Sections

For sections to be available for assignment and student preference in Blackboard, they must be correctly scheduled in the PeopleSoft Course Information System (CIS) by your department’s CIS coordinator. If a new section is desired, the section must first be created in CIS. Updates to sections in CIS, whether additions, deletions, or meeting time changes, appear in Blackboard within a few hours of entry into CIS. The transfer of information from CIS to Blackboard is not immediate. Contact your department’s CIS coordinator regarding changes to sections.

## III. Accessing the Tool

The sectioning tool is available to those with Blackboard course roles of instructors TA, and course builders. Only one user is permitted access to the sectioning tool for a particular course at one time.

To access the sectioning tool for a course:

1. Log on to Blackboard at: <http://www.princeton.edu/blackboard>
2. Select the Courses tab and choose the course.
3. Click the Control Panel option in the side menu.
4. Under Course Tools, click the Sectioning Tool link.

**Sectioning Tools for ENG201\_F2007**

**Precept Section**

▶ [Activate Student Preference Tool](#)  
If you want students to select several precept preferences, you need to activate this tool.

▶ [Section Sorting Tool](#)  
If you do NOT want students to select precept preferences, proceed to the Section Sorting Tool.

**Help In Using the Sectioning Tool**

▶ [Download the Sectioning Tool Brochure \(pdf\)](#)

The page that opens will offer you two choices: Activate Student Preference Tool or Section Sorting Tool. If you have already enabled the students to use the Student Preference Tool, or do not wish to give them that option, select Section Sorting Tool. If you wish to allow students to indicate section preferences so you can subsequently sort by those preferences, select Activate Student Preference Tool.

## IV. Assigning Students

1. Click the Control Panel option in the side menu.
2. Under Course Tools, click the Sectioning Tool link.
3. On the page that opens, click on the second option, Section Sorting Tool.

A list of students who have enrolled in the course and the sections defined for the course will be presented. You can sort the students into the sections either automatically or manually.

### Automatic Sort

To have the tool automatically assign the students to sections, click the [SORT] button. The sorting process may take a while to assign the students because it is checking against each student's schedule for conflicts.

Clicking "Save" will save your changes and keep you on this screen.

Clicking "Cancel" will take you to the control panel without saving your changes.

Clicking "Notify" will save the section assignments and will send email to students who have been assigned. It will then return you to the Control Panel.

Clicking "Preview" will show you a total for each section for all student's first choice.

Clicking "Print" will print out the list of sections with assigned students.

### Manual Sort

In the right pane, click the [+] (Show/Hide) button for the course section to which you want to assign students.

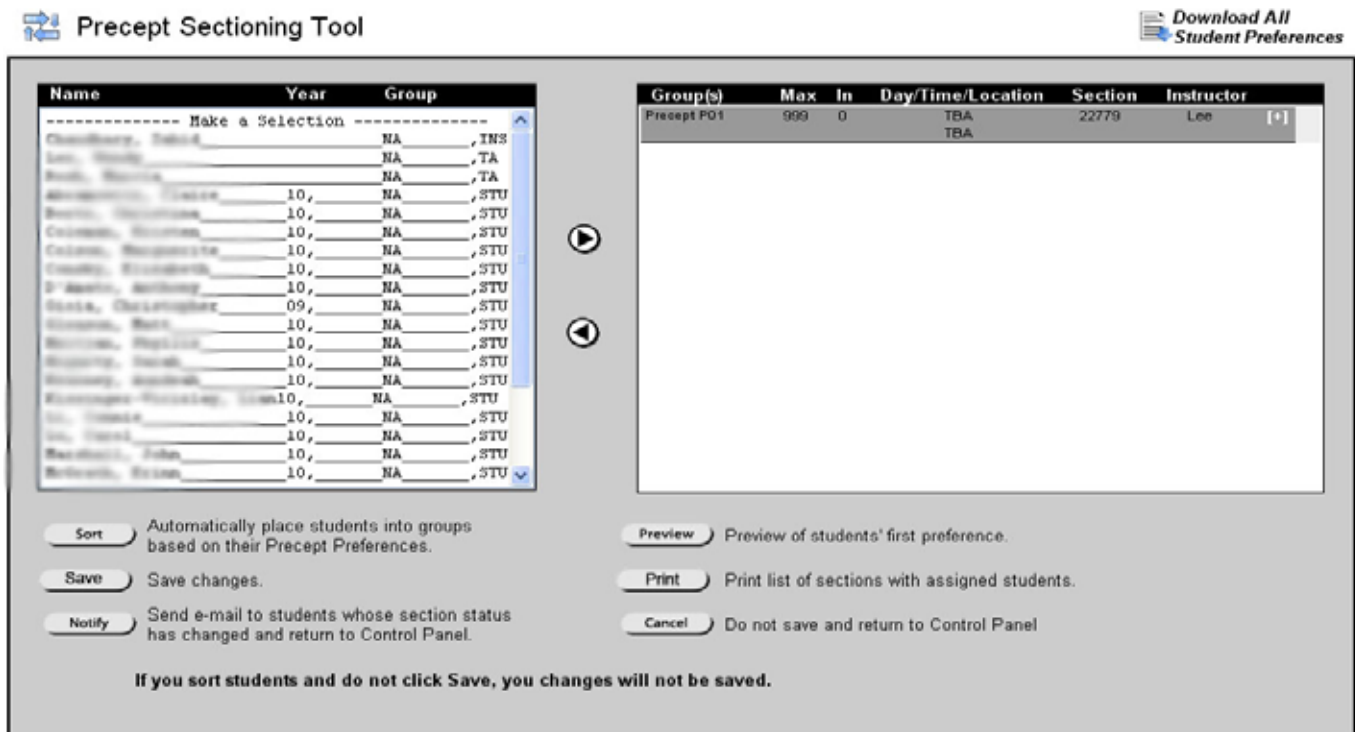
In the left pane, highlight the name of the student (or instructor, or TA) you want to assign to the section.  
(Use Shift+Click to select a range of consecutive names and Ctrl+Click to select multiple members in the list.)

Click the >>> (Add to Group List) button to add the highlighted individual or individuals to the section group.

Clicking "Update" will save your changes and keep you on this screen.

Clicking "OK" will save your changes and return you to the Control Panel.

Clicking "Cancel" will take you to the control panel without saving your changes.



**Precept Sectioning Tool** Download All Student Preferences

Name	Year	Group
----- Make a Selection -----		
Chandrasekhar, Daniel		NA, INS
Lee, Wendy		NA, TA
Smith, Marissa		NA, TA
Abrahamson, Grace	10,	NA, STU
Berlin, Jonathan	10,	NA, STU
Cassano, Thomas	10,	NA, STU
Cassano, Christopher	10,	NA, STU
Cassano, Elizabeth	10,	NA, STU
D'Amico, Anthony	10,	NA, STU
Evans, Christopher	09,	NA, STU
Evans, Matt	10,	NA, STU
Malone, Matthew	10,	NA, STU
Mooney, Noah	10,	NA, STU
Mooney, Andrew	10,	NA, STU
Mooney, Michael	10,	NA, STU
Lee, David	10,	NA, STU
Lee, David	10,	NA, STU
Wardlaw, John	10,	NA, STU
Wardlaw, Scott	10,	NA, STU

Group(s)	Max	In	Day/Time/Location	Section	Instructor
Precept P01	999	0	TBA	22779	Lee [1]
			TBA		

**Sort** Automatically place students into groups based on their Precept Preferences.

**Save** Save changes.

**Notify** Send e-mail to students whose section status has changed and return to Control Panel.

**Preview** Preview of students' first preference.

**Print** Print list of sections with assigned students.

**Cancel** Do not save and return to Control Panel

**If you sort students and do not click Save, you changes will not be saved.**

## V. Enabling the Sectioning Tool for Students

1. Click the Control Panel option in the side menu.
2. Under Course Tools, click the Sectioning Tool link.
3. On the page that opens, click on the first option Activate Student Preference Tool.
4. Set the Start and End dates under Student Section Preference Tool Availability.

For your convenience, calendar icons will also allow you to pick dates. Be mindful of setting the times that you would like to become available and unavailable on the dates indicated.

These dates are only for the current term and course. You must set new dates and times for any other individual courses you are managing.

You may use either the default message for both the Announcement Information and Email to Students, or you can edit and create your own message. We suggest you leave the link to the course site intact.

The default message reads “In order to indicate your Class preferences for this course, select “Section Preference” from the course menu, and follow the directions. You may only indicate your preferences online from <startDate> to <endDate>. For further information or assistance, please go to <linkToKnowledgeBase> and follow the directions on how to select a section.” The <startDate> and <endDate> will be populated with the specific dates entered.

To post the Announcement message and distribute the email message to all students enrolled in the course, click Submit. If you wish to cancel the operation (prior to clicking Submit) click Cancel.

The screenshot shows a multi-step form titled "Make Student Precept Preference Tool Available".

- Step 1: Set Start and End Dates for Student Precept Preference Tool Availability**
  - Start Date Range: Includes a calendar icon and a time selection dropdown (Jun 05 2005, 11:00 AM).
  - End Date: Includes a calendar icon and a time selection dropdown (Jun 10 2005, 09:45 AM).
- Step 2: Announcement Information**
  - Course Name: SOC250\_S2005 The Western Way of War
  - Message: A text area containing a warning not to change dates and instructions for students to select "Section Preference" from the course menu, with placeholders for <startDate>, <endDate>, and <linkToKnowledgeBase>.
  - Next Step: "Set Announcement Message to Default"
- Step 3: Send Email To All Students**
  - Course Name: SOC250\_S2005 The Western Way of War
  - Message: A text area with the same warning and instructions as in Step 2.
  - Next Step: "Set Email Message to Default"
- Step 4: Submit**
  - Buttons: "Cancel" and "Submit"

The students can be sorted at any time (either manually, automatically, during and after preference selection). If this sorting is done during the defined time period for the students to select their preferences, the tool will be operating on a first-come, first-served logic. If the user does not sort students until the end of the defined time period, the tool will be sort the students on a random basis, taking into account student preferences only, regardless of when the student indicated his/her preferences.

## VI. Notifying Students of Section Assignments

After section assignments are made, click Notify to send e-mail to students with new or revised section assignment, notifying them of the section to which they have been assigned. Clicking Notify will automatically send an email to students regarding their section assignment. This feature may be used more than once as tool is programmed to notify only those students with new or revised assignments.

## VII. Sending Email to Section Members

A Blackboard group is automatically created for every course section. These section-specific Blackboard groups include all members of the course section, and can be used to e-mail information and updates to the members of the section.

To send e-mail to a particular course section group from within Blackboard:

1. Select the Courses tab and choose the course.
2. Select the Communications option in the side menu.
3. Click the Send Email link.
4. Click the Select Groups link.
5. Select the checkbox for the section group to which you want to send email.
6. Type a subject line and your message and click Submit.

## FAQ

### Where do I find the sectioning tool?

The sectioning tool is available through the Blackboard course management site at:  
[www.princeton.edu/blackboard](http://www.princeton.edu/blackboard)  
It is located in the Control panel, among the Course Tools.

### Who can use this tool?

The sectioning tool is available to those with Blackboard course roles of instructor, TA, and course builder. Only one user is permitted access to the sectioning tool for a particular course at a time.

### What do I do when I receive an alert that there is a scheduling conflict?

If you encounter a scheduling conflict when assigning a student to a section, you can click the OK button to add the student to the section despite the alert. To remove the student from the assigned section, highlight the student's name from the assigned section, highlight the student's name in the section list and click the [<<<] (Remove from Group List) button.

### What about students who enroll in a course during or after the Student Preference dates?

Students who enroll in a course after the dates have been set for the Student Preference part of the tool will receive an email from Blackboard informing them of the dates for indicating their section preferences. Students who enroll in a course after the End Date for the Student Preferences must be manually assigned to a section.

## Getting Help

For help with the Blackboard sectioning tool:

Consult the online help within the sectioning tool

Call the OIT Help Desk at (609) 258-HELP

Contact Blackboard to schedule individual or group training (609) 258-0737

Search the OIT KnowledgeBase  
<http://www.princeton.edu/kb>