How Students Access Chats and Virtual Classrooms

Using Blackboard’s Collaboration Tool, instructors can create and host a course-related chat session or virtual classroom in which students and instructors can interact and converse. In a chat, students and instructors may converse and share information in text format. This is "synchronous" communication, so everyone participating must be available at the same time. In a Virtual Classroom, instructors and students can converse in a chat room environment enhanced with tools, such as a white board, group browser, or question and answer area.

Your instructor may choose to record the chat or virtual classroom session and make a transcript of it available for later use.

**FINDING COLLABORATION SESSIONS**

1) In your course navigation, click on the button that links to the collaboration tools area of your course (i.e. Collaboration, Chats etc).

2) That should take you to the **COLLABORATION SESSIONS** page.

On this page, a list of the available chat and virtual classroom sessions will appear, along with their dates of availability.
USING A CHAT

1) Click on the link of the chat you want to join.

2) The LAUNCHING CHAT TOOL page should appear. Wait a few moments for the chat to load.

3) When the chat window pops up on the screen, take a moment to familiarize yourself with its tools and features. The chat window is composed of a participants list, main message pane, text-composition field, and a private message tool.

Messages that are typed in the COMPOSE text-box will be added to the main message pane for all to see.

Messages sent through the PRIVATE MESSAGE tool will be added to the main message area, but can only be seen by the sender (you) and your selected recipient.

If you are having problems accessing a chat or virtual classroom, please see the trouble-shooting tips at the end of this document.
USING A VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

1) On the **COLLABORATION SESSIONS** page, click the link of the available virtual classroom session that you want to join.

2) The **LAUNCHING VIRTUAL CLASSROOM** page will appear. Wait a few moments for the virtual classroom window to appear.

3) When the Virtual Classroom window appears, take a moment to familiarize yourself with its tools and features. A virtual classroom is essentially like a chat but with extra tools for sharing information with many people at the same time.

**Tools and Functions**

- **Map**
  A course map, used for viewing information located within your Blackboard course.

- **Whiteboard**
  A virtual drawing board with drawing, text, and equation writing tools.

- **Group Browser**
  A shared browser to display Web pages. You can navigate the Web together.

- **Ask Question/Question Inbox**
  Submit a question to the Question Inbox for another person to answer.
SENDING A PRIVATE MESSAGE IN A CHAT OR VIRTUAL CLASSROOM SESSION

1. In a chat and virtual classroom, private messages can be sent to individual participants through selecting a participant from the list of participants in the list and clicking on the Private message button at the bottom of the Participants Pane.

2. A “Compose Private Message Box” will appear, in which you type your message and click submit.

The message will be added to the message pane, but only you and the participant that you sent it to will actually be able to read it.

TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

Because the chat or virtual classroom opens in a pop-up window, be sure you have pop-up blocking software turned off. If certain features of the chat or virtual classroom are not working, close the chat or virtual classroom window and try opening the session again.

If the chat or virtual classroom never loads, you may need to install a Java Plug-in on your computer. The Java Plug-in is necessary for these collaboration tools to run successfully on your computer. You can access the Java Plug-in and installation instructions by attempting to access the chat or virtual classroom and clicking the links that are listed on the Launching Chat or Launching Virtual Classroom page.

Once you have installed the Java Plug-in, restart your computer, log back into Blackboard, and try accessing the chat or virtual classroom again.
If you are having trouble accessing tools, entering text, or viewing text within the chat or virtual classroom window, please try one or more of following:

- If you are trying to access the collaboration session using Safari or Internet Explorer, try using the Fire Fox Web browser.

- Download and install a current version of Java, restart your computer, log back into Blackboard, and try accessing the chat or virtual classroom again.

- Clear your computer’s Java cache to force a fresh download of the collaboration session applets from the server.