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My Home

My Home is your starting point inside the Learning Environment. From here, you can set up your profile, change your password and email address, edit your preferences, and access your courses. My Home is also your organization’s homepage, where you can read news items and access any organization-level content, links, discussions, or other available resources.
Accessing your courses

To access a course through My Home, click the course's name in My Courses.

Each course has its own unique navbar providing links to the tools and resources available inside the course, the homepage provides a showcase for course related information like news, updates and bookmarks. To learn how to customize your course’s navbar, see Homepages and Navbars User Guide.

To get back to My Home, click My Home on the course navbar.

Navigating inside a course

The primary navigation tool for a course is the navbar, which is always located at the top of the screen and displays links to the tools available in your course. Within each tool
there are tool menus to navigate to different sections and pages, and tabs to switch between sections within a page.

1. **Navbar**
   Switch between tools.

2. **Left Tool Menu**
   Switch between areas within a tool (only used for larger tools).

3. **Top Tool Menu**
   Switch between pages within a tool area.

4. **Tabs**
   Switch between options within a single page.
Lists

The Learning Environment often presents information in the form of interactive lists that you can search and sort. When a list is long, items are split across multiple pages so that the list loads quickly; you can jump to any page and change how many items appear on each page.

**Note** If you select items in a list and then move to another page within the list, the items are no longer selected even though they are part of the same list.
Actions

The Learning Environment makes extensive use of icons to initiate tasks and actions. To find out what an icon does, hover your mouse over it; an explanation appears above the icon.
Entering Dates

Entering dates is easy. You can either use the available drop-downs to manually select the date, or you can click the Select Date icon to select the desired date from a separate calendar window. You can also click the Now button to automatically use the current date and time.
Showing and hiding advanced options

In many places, advanced options are collapsed by default to help you focus on essential features and settings. You can display advanced options by clicking the **Show Options** link. If you save the page, the Learning Environment remembers which options you displayed and shows them next time. You can hide options again by clicking the **Hide Options** link.
Getting Help

Help icons and on-screen instructions appear throughout the Learning Environment, providing you with ready information about the specific page and tool that you are using. It’s like a helpful nudge whenever you’re a little stuck.

Customizing your Learning Environment

Setting preferences

The Preferences tool allows you to change your online status, font settings, paging preferences, discussion room layout, email preferences, and password. Customizing your personal settings is a great way to ensure that you are comfortable in using the Learning Environment.
1 On My Home, click the **My Preferences** link in the **Welcome** widget to access your preference options.

2 Click on a tab to choose the tool whose preferences you want to change.

Not all of the preferences described may be available to you. Their availability depends on how your organization has set up the Learning Environment platform.

### Online Status

1 On My Home, click the **My Preferences** link in the **Welcome** widget.

2 In the **General** tab, click the **Appear Offline** button to switch your status between on and off.

3 Click **Save**.

When your status is set to offline, you remain logged in to the Learning Environment, but appear offline to other users in the **Classlist** and **Pager** tools.

### Preferred Language

Choose your preferred language from the list provided. All pages and content in the Learning Environment will appear in your chosen language.

**Note** To override users’ preferred languages for a course you may force a course to be viewed in a certain language. See *Editing Course Tools and Properties User Guide*.

### Navigation Bar Auto-Refresh

When on, the navigation bar auto-refresh option is used to automatically check for incoming Pager or Email messages. However, for users who use assistive technology, it is recommended that they turn the auto-refresh option off. To refresh the navigation bar when this option is off, go to My Home or select a Course Offering, or use the refresh feature in your browser.

1 On My Home, click the **My Preferences** link in the **Welcome** widget.

2 In the **General** tab, select the **On** or **Off** radio button in the navigation bar auto-refresh field.

3 Click **Save**.

### Fonts

1 On My Home, click the **My Preferences** link in the **Welcome** widget.

2 In the **General** tab, use the drop-down lists in the **Font Settings** section to select a font type and size.

3 Click **Save**.

The **Preview** box displays a sample of your new font setting.
Course CD-ROM

Some courses make use of CD-ROM content. From the drop-down list, select the drive letter used by your computer's CD-ROM. (Not applicable if you are using a Mac.)

Operating System

Use the Operating System drop-down list to select the operating system that you are running. This setting is used in conjunction with the Course CD-ROM setting. If you are using a Mac, your CD-ROM drive does not have a drive letter; if you are using a PC, it does. The Learning Environment needs to know whether you are using a Mac to be able to access the CD-ROM. (If your courses don’t make use of CD-ROM content, this setting is not applicable.)

Paging

Limit the number of items displayed when viewing selected pages by setting the Paging preferences.

1. On My Home, click the My Preferences link in the Welcome widget.
2. Go to the Paging tab.
3. Use the drop-down lists to select paging values for various tools.
4. Click Save.

Discussions

Use this page to specify the way you want to view messages in the Discussions tool. See Discussions User Guide for information about each setting.

Pager

Receive visual notification when someone pages you and select your pager sound.

If the pager icon is Off, you still receive incoming pages. However, you must check for pages manually by clicking on the pager and selecting from the list.

1. On My Home, click the My Preferences link in the Welcome widget.
2. Go to the Pager tab.
3. Turn the pager icon on or off.
4. Select a page sound.
5. Click Save.

Email

Use this page to specify your email settings.

Turn your settings on or off by selecting the checkboxes and radial buttons, and entering information into the fields beside the options.
Click **Save** once you have made your changes.

**Note** The type of configuration you have determines whether or not all these settings are available.

### Email Settings options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Email Options</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track activity for messages sent to internal email addresses</td>
<td>A personal setting that, when turned on, tracks the status of a sent message (read or unread), and when the message was replied to and/or forwarded. <strong>View Recipient Activity</strong> link accessed through messages in the Sent Mail folder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include original message in email replies</td>
<td>When you reply to an email, the original message will be included with your reply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send a copy of each outgoing message to [specified email address]</td>
<td>This option allows you to send a copy of all the emails you send to a specified address. Click the <strong>Change email address</strong> link to specify the address you want to send copies to. Changing this address will change your external address for all mail sent from the Learning Environment application. This option is only available when you are using Send Only email.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save a copy or your sent messages to the Sent Mail folder.</td>
<td>A copy of the messages you send, with attachments, will be saved to the Sent Email folder. Only applies to users who can receive email.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Reply to” Email Address:</td>
<td>This option allows you to set an address to receive replies to your emails, if different from the address the emails originated at. Use this option if you have Send-Only permissions as some applications will not deliver mail without a valid reply address.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Display Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Show the Message Preview pane.</td>
<td>Using the preview pane allows you to read messages from within the Message List page. If you turn this option off, clicking on a message will open a new window containing the message. Only applies to users who can receive email.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show the Folder List pane</td>
<td>This option displays the folder pane to the left of the Message List area. The folder pane contains the same content as you would find in the folder drop-down list. Only applies to users who can receive email.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark messages as read when viewed in the Message Preview pane</td>
<td>Using the preview pane to read your messages will mark them as read. Only applies to users who can receive email.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show internal email addresses in the Address Book</td>
<td>Internal addresses for your system contacts will appear in the Address Book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show external email addresses in the Address Book</td>
<td>External addresses for your system contacts will appear in the Address Book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow filtering messages and contacts on group enrollment</td>
<td>Controls whether groups and sections are listed in the Filter By field in the message list and the address book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Forwarding Options**

Forward incoming messages to an alternate email account
Enter an address into this field to have email sent to your internal email address redirected to this address. Only applies to users who can receive email.

**After selecting the above option, choose one of the following:**

Forward and delete from the 'Inbox' folder
Mail will be forwarded to your specified address and then deleted. Deleted mail is not stored in the trash folder and does not affect allocated usage.

Forward and mark unread in the 'Inbox' folder
Mail will be forwarded to your specified address and then marked as unopened in the Learning Environment mail list.

Forward and mark read in the 'Inbox' folder
Mail will be forwarded to your specified address and then marked as opened in the Learning Environment mail list.

**IMAP Options (when available)**

IMAP Server
Server name of your external mail application.

IMAP Server Username
Enter your username for your external mail application here.

IMAP Server Password
Enter the password for your external mail application.

**Metadata**


1. On My Home, click the **My Preferences** link in the **Welcome** widget.
2. Go to the **Metadata** tab.
3 Select your Metadata display settings.
4 Click Save.

Email Address and Site Password
If your external email address has changed since registration, you will need to update it in the My Email Address link in the Welcome widget on My Home. The external email address that you specify may occasionally be used to send important login and enrolment confirmation information.

Note If your organization is currently set up with Full Email, updating your email address in this section will not replace your email address in the Learning Environment or forward your Learning Environment mail to the external email address specified in this area. It simply provides the system with an external email address.

If your organization currently uses Send-Only Email, it is critical to make sure that all users have updated their external email address in the My Email Address link in the Welcome widget on My Home. The Send-Only email system relies on the external email address that users provide in this area.

Changing Your Email and Password
Update your email address and login password from My Home using the My Email Address and My Password links in the Welcome widget.

To change your email
1 On My Home, click the My Email Address link in the Welcome widget.
2 Type your Learning Environment login password in the System Password field.
3 Type your new email address in the New Email field.
4 Click the Update Email button.

To change your password
1 On My Home, click the My Password link in the Welcome widget.
2 Type your current Learning Environment password in the Old Password field.
3 Type your new password in the New Password field.
4 Confirm your new password in the Confirm New Password field.
5 Click the Change Password button.

Personal Homepage
Display information about yourself to other users using this simple tool to create a personal webpage. It typically contains some text, graphics and links to other websites.

Building a personal biography is a great way to utilize this tool.
You can also access and create or edit your personal home page from the Classlist tool. Click the **Edit My Home page** icon beside your name on the list.

**Note** Your personal home page is separate from and does not replace My Home.

- **To create a new personal homepage**
  1. From My Home, click the **My Personal Homepage** link in the **Welcome** widget.
  2. Click the **New** icon.
  3. Type a name for your home page.
  4. Click **OK**.

- **To upload an existing personal homepage**
  1. From My Home, click the **My Personal Homepage** link in the **Welcome** widget.
  2. Click the **Upload** icon.
  3. In the File Upload window, click **Browse** and locate your file.
  4. Click **Upload**.

  **Note** Ensure that you have also uploaded all supporting files and images and referenced them properly.

You can now:

- **View** your home page by clicking on the file title.
- **Rename** your home page by clicking the **Rename** icon beside the file title.
- Click the **Make this My Home page** icon next to the file to make that file appear as your home page in your profile.
- **Delete** the file by clicking the **Delete** icon.
- **Edit** the file by clicking the **Edit** icon.

**Profile**

Build a personal profile through the My Profile tool. Add information, including pictures, in the textboxes. This information will be viewable from the **Classlist** link in a course.

Filling out your profile is optional, but this feature is a great way to get to know other users. If you are not comfortable revealing information about yourself, simply leave the profile blank.

- **To complete your personal profile**
  1. From My Home, click the **My Profile** link in the **Welcome** widget.
  2. Fill in the text fields.
  3. To upload a picture, click the **Browse** button next to the **Picture** field and locate the image. Click **Open**.
4 Click **Save Changes**.

You can also access and create or edit your profile from the **Classlist** tool. Click the **Edit My Profile** icon beside your name on the list.

**User Progress**

Use this feature to view the progress of users enrolled in your courses.

1. From My Home, click the **View my Progress** link in the **Welcome** widget.
2. To view another user's progress, click the **Select different user** link.
3. To view another course, click the **Select different course** link.
4. Choose which tool you want to check progress for using the **Tool** drop-down menu.

**Accessibility**

Desire2Learn is dedicated to developing technology that meets the teaching and learning needs of all clients. We believe that instructional practices should focus on helping people learn, and should not be limited by the learning environment the material is delivered in. We are working with interested clients and accessibility groups to improve both the usability and accessibility of our products.

**What you can do**

As a person teaching a course you hold a pivotal role in ensuring that the Learning Environment is accessible to all users, regardless of their learning needs. It is your content that users taking a course must access, assess, and respond to, therefore, it is important that you understand the impact your design decisions have on your the users enrolled in your courses.

**Organizing your course**

Among the many factors that pedagogical theory tries to address is the diverse learning styles and needs of users. All people learn differently; finding learning materials that engage, educate, and evaluate people effectively can be one of the most difficult and important considerations for someone teaching a course. It can be even more challenging if there are users with disabilities or alternative learning needs involved. The following tips are ideas that you may want to keep in mind when setting up your course material.

- Use the competencies tool to evaluate a user’s performance so that different assignments can be tied to the same learning objective. For example, set up an activity related to a particular learning objective and let users choose the assignment they want to complete to obtain that activity. For example, they could write a reflection, prepare an interview, or create a slide show presentation to demonstrate what they’ve learned. No matter which assignment they complete, you would
evaluate it using the same activity. Organizing material this way helps users understand how assignments relate to broader skills and knowledge, and puts the onus of learning on the person learning. (For more information on competencies see the *Competencies and Rubrics User and Reference Guide*.)

- Use the Discussions tool rather than instant messaging for user participation and reflection. Instant messaging tools can be difficult for users with visual, motor, or cognitive disabilities because they require users to process and respond to information quickly using technology that does not match their needs. Discussion areas give all users time to reflect. If you use instant messaging, be aware that some users may require an alternative solution such as phone or face-to-face contact.

- Do not convert PowerPoint presentations to images in LiveRoom if you have visually impaired users because screen readers won't be able to read the content and users won't be able to resize the text or graphics. PowerPoint slides are converted by default; you will need to uncheck **Convert Word documents to HTML and PowerPoint slides to images** on the Create File Resource pop-up page. Alternatively, make it easy for users to request the originals so they can adjust and print them as desired.

- Use the Content tool or News tool to create an overview, or quick reference page, for each week or major project. Provide links to all applicable content, discussion areas, dropbox folders, quizzes, etc. This is a great way to ensure users in your course don't miss important tasks and it provides screen reader and keyboard users an easy way to jump to relevant material.

- Use the Content tool for readings and course material. HTML code is easier for assistive technologies to interpret than application based files such as MS Word. Use a simple layout for the material that does not organize information in tables or columns. Use headings to communicate the relationships between sections. Use Heading 1 for the title, Heading 2 for major sections, Heading 3 for subsections, etc. Include a table of contents that links to each section for longer documents. Also include links back to the table of contents at the end of each section and a skip table of contents link at the beginning. Simply organized material is easier for users to read and understand; assistive technology to interpret and present; and mobile and handheld devices to resize.

- If your readings and lecture materials use a lot of graphics, tables, videos, or audio recordings, provide a text-only alternative. Text-only material should supplement, not replace, other delivery methods. Videos, graphics, and audio files are a great way to generate interest in a topic, present material from different perspectives, and help cognitively disabled users through redundancy. Make the text-only alternatives easy to compile for print so that all users can use them as study aids at their leisure.

- Set up a special discussion area where users with disabilities can post questions and seek extra help. Encourage users to provide specific information on how you can make content more accessible to them, and to collaborate and aid each other. Keep notes on valuable comments and tips and use them in subsequent classes.

- Use the Equation Editor in combination with written descriptions of the formulas. The symbols used in equation editors cannot be interpreted by screen readers or
some browsers. Written descriptions also help users with different learning styles interpret what they need to do to complete the equation.

- Use a vertical layout for quizzes so that only one answer/concept appears per line. Screen readers will interpret the order of the material easier; it will minimize formatting problems when text sizes are adjusted; and most users will interpret their options quicker.

**Setting release conditions and special access**

In addition to organizing your course in a way that benefits all users, you can also set release conditions and special access. Release Conditions and special access allow you to set criteria for the availability of content, which can be useful for accommodating users with different needs. The following tips are examples of when you might use release conditions or special access to improve accessibility. (For more information on release conditions see *Release Conditions User Guide*. For more information on special access for Quizzes, see *Quizzes User Guide*, for Surveys, see *Quizzes User Guide*, for Dropbox, see *Dropbox User Guide*.)

- Create a group for disabled users and use release conditions to provide them with material, tasks, work areas, etc. that are not available to other users. This is a great option if you do not want other users to see or have access to the additional items.

- If you are teaching a large course you may not know the individual needs of all of the users enrolled. Set up a checklist that users can use to request extra resources, help, or material in different format. For example, for each week or major assignment create checklist items for text-only versions of material, an extra help discussions forum, additional reading materials, and alternative formats for multimedia. Set release conditions for the checklist items so the requested content is automatically released. This option ensures that the majority of users access material as you intended, yet users with other learning needs are supported.

- Set up a survey that users with learning disabilities can take to help you assess their learning needs. Use the survey to determine what special access rights and extra resources to give the users.

- Set up quizzes, surveys, or dropbox folders with time restrictions (availability), but give special access to users who need more time because of technological, physical, or cognitive impediments. Alternatively, many people creating quizzes prefer not to set time restrictions because they can impact the quality of answers.

**Meeting web content standards**

In the previous topics we discussed how to organize your course and set criteria for releasing content in particular tools. This section discusses the design decisions you need to consider when creating your actual content. Most of the tips provided here are web content standards proposed by the World Wide Web Consortium, the leading body for setting accessibility standards.
• Include alternative text descriptions (alt text) for all graphics. Use double quotes "" as the alt text if the object is a decorative element that does not add meaning. If the graphic is a link, begin the alt text “Link to…”

• Include detailed captions below all graphics, tables, and graphs. These captions should explain what the objects convey. For tables and graphs, also include a summary of the important trends and statistics. This will help all users interpret the objects.

• Use the same text onscreen and in the alt text for links. Make sure the text is descriptive of the action that will occur. Never use text such as “Click Here” as the link. Screen reader users often use a list of links to quickly navigate actions on a page; this is not possible if links are not descriptive.

• Include text versions of multimedia content, such as audio or video files. If you do not have the time to create a complete text alternative, include a descriptive label that summarizes the content.

• Do not use blinking or flashing multimedia as it can cause seizures in users due to photosensitivity. Use animation when it helps convey a concept and not to draw attention to an unchanging object. Use a combination of size, color, and prominence to draw attention to objects.

• Never use only color to convey meaning. If you want to show how concepts and objects relate to each other use a combination of size, color, and text labels.

• Use headings to organize information. Use Heading 1 for titles, Headings 2 for sections, Heading 3 for sub-sections, etc. If headings are used correctly, screen reader users can quickly search a page by heading.

• Ensure there is a strong contrast between the foreground and background colors used in your course materials. (See Editing Course Tools and Properties User Guide, for more information on setting course colors.)

• If you use tables, make sure they make sense when read from left to right (linearization). Screen readers have difficulty conveying information that reads from top to bottom.

• Present material in HTML where possible. If you need to use other file formats (such as video files), choose formats that are recognized by most browsers and/or offer the material in multiple formats.

• If you use PDF files, make sure they were scanned with optical character recognition (OCR) so the text can be read by screen readers. Scan pages with multiple columns one column at a time so that OCR works correctly. Add bookmarks for major sections to make the content easier to navigate.

If you create PDF documents from Microsoft Word or another word processor, make sure you format titles and sections using headings so they are tagged correctly in the PDF.

• Use relative font sizes and make sure the text and page layout adjusts when font sizes are changed. Users should not have to scroll horizontally.
User Preferences

The My Preferences tool includes a number of settings that can be adjusted to improve accessibility. These settings are controlled by individual users. Make sure users enrolled in your courses are aware of options that might benefit them. (See Customizing your Learning Environment Setting preferences, p. 9, for more information on personal settings.)

- Set the Navigation bar auto-refresh to Off if you are using a screen reader or else the screen reader will begin reading material over again every time a page refreshes.
- Increase the Size of the Font Setting if you have difficulty seeing text in the Learning Environment.
- Set the different Paging options to low values if you are using a large font so your pages are not unnecessarily long.
- Set your Discussions options to hide the discussion topics list and use the Reading Style layout if you are using a screen reader.
- Set your Email options to hide the Folder List and Message Preview panes.
- Set the Incoming Page Icon to On if you are deaf or hard of hearing and select an Incoming Page Sound if you are blind or visually impaired.
- Set your Metadata options to Basic and Expanded.
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