

This quick start provides conceptual information about the layout and functionality of the Learning Environment, as well as procedural information on how to complete common tasks to help assistive technology and keyboard users navigate the system.

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## Introduction

The Learning Environment is a learning management system that allows you to access course material online. There are a number of learning tools within the system that course content is contained in. Understanding how the system is laid out and how the different tools work makes it easier to use the system with assistive technology.

This quick start guide does not document how to use specific assistive technology. Please refer to the help material for the software or device you are using if you want to learn about its specific functionality, shortcuts, and commands.

## Logging in

The Login page for the Learning Environment is organized into two frames: a **Navigation Links** frame and a **Contents** frame. You can move between sections in the **Contents** frame using level one headings.

There are three form elements on the page: **Username**, **Password**, and **Login**. The **Username** field has focus when you enter the page. The **Password** field and **Login** button are the next tab options.

There are two additional options for the page displayed as links: **Forgot Password?** and **Please click here for a System Check before you login**. The **Forgot Password?** link opens a new page that sends a copy of your password to your email address. The **System Check** link opens a new page that lets you know if your computer meets the minimum criteria for using the Learning Environment. If you do not meet the criteria, a message displays explaining what components need updating.

## Logging out

The **Logout** link is one of the navigation links available in the **Navigation** frame (also called the Navbar). It is usually the last link in the tab order. Selecting **Logout** takes you to the Login page and ends your Learning Environment session.

### System time-outs

If you are inactive for an extended period of time, the system may log you out of the Learning Environment. The length of time is customizable and determined by your organization. Make sure you save your data regularly.

## My Home

**My Home** is the first page you visit when you enter the Learning Environment. It contains a list of your personal tools, such as **Preferences** and **Locker**, and a list of the courses that you are enrolled in. It can also contain information about your organization such as a welcome message and news.

There are two frames on the page. The **Navigation Links** frame contains links to tools in the Learning Environment. The **Contents** frame contains a number of widgets for displaying information, such as **News**, **My Courses**, and **Events**. Each widget has a level one heading that can be used for navigation.

To access a course, go to the My Courses widget and use the TAB key to move through the list links until you find the appropriate course. For 8.3.0 MR5 (and later), 8.3.1 MR2 (and later) and 8.4.0, if you have different roles in different courses, your courses are

listed in separate tabs. So courses you TA for are listed separate from courses in which you are only a participant. Check with your institution's support personnel if you have version questions.

## Course Home

**Course Home** is the first page you visit when you enter a course. Like **My Home** it contains your personal tools and different widgets for displaying information.

In the **Navigation Links** frame, or Navbar, you can find links to the tools available in your course. For example you could have access to the Content, Dropbox, Locker, Quizzes, Grades, and Discussions tools. Select any of these links to open the tool.

In the **Contents** frame you may also find links to different tools or content. Use the headings to quickly find out what kind of content is available.

## Personal tools

Both **My Home** and **Course Home** likely contain a **My Settings** widget with links to tools that store your personal information and preferences. You may want to set these options before you start using the system.

- **Preferences** Used to change display settings for the Learning Environment.
- **Email Address** Used to change your default email address.
- **Password** Used to change your password.
- **Locker** Used to store personal files.
- **Homepage** Used to create a personal homepage.
- **Profile** Used to edit your shared personal information.
- **View my progress** Used to view your progress in the course
- **ePortfolio** Used to store artifacts and get feedbacks.

### Preferences

There are a number of settings in the Preferences tool that may be useful to people with different use needs. The settings are grouped

on a number of tabs which you can navigate using the tab and enter keys.

**Note** You may not have access to all of the options described below.

- On the **General** tab, set **Navigation bar auto-refresh** to **Off** if you are using a screen reader or else the screen reader will re-read material every time the page refreshes.
- On the **General** tab, change the font **Face** or **Size** to make it easier to read text in the Learning Environment.
- On the **Paging** tab, set the different paging options to low values if you are using a large font so your pages are not unnecessarily long.
- On the **Discussions** tab, unselect **Show the discussion topics list** and **Show the preview pane** and select **Grid Style** to simplify the page for screen readers or large text.
- On the **Email** tab, unselect **Show the Message Preview pane** and **Show the Folder List pane** to simplify the page for screen readers, smaller screens, or large text.
- On the **Pager** tab, set the **Incoming Page Icon** to **On** if you require a visual indication for new pages and select an **Incoming Page Sound** if you require an auditory prompt. Turn off all pager options if you do not want your screen to refresh when you are paged.
- On the **Metadata** tab, select the **Basic** and **Expanded** options to simplify the page for screen readers, smaller screens, or large text.

## General page layout

### Frames

Most tools are organized in two frames. The top frame is the **Navigation Links** frame, or navbar, which is used to navigate to other tools or to logout. The main frame is the **Contents** frame, which is usually divided into two areas: an **Instructions** widget and the main page. A few tools also have a left tool menu.

### Skip links

At the start of the navbar and widgets there is a hidden **Skip** link. Selecting a **Skip** link skips the content in the navbar or widget.

## Headings

Level one headings are used throughout the system for widgets and page titles. They are the easiest way to navigate between widgets and to find the main content area of a page. Typically the content area is the second level one heading on a page. Level two headings are used for page and table sections. They can be helpful when filling out a form or trying to find a specific category in a list.

## Tables

Tables are often used to list the categories and items that are available for a tool or to list the users in a class or group. They are organized with titles, subheadings, and descriptions of the table layout to help with navigation.

Most tables have an **Actions** column that contains icons which perform some action, such as editing or viewing statistics for an item. To select an action using assistive technology or your keyboard, navigate to the row with the item you want to perform an action on and then tab to the appropriate icon and select it. There are also multi-action icons at the top and bottom of some tables which perform an action on all items in the list.

Most complex tables let you set how many items or users you want to display per page. Set the number of items to display per page using the **per page** drop-down list. This drop-down list updates on selection so you must use the Alt and Down Arrow keys to select an option from a keyboard. If there are more items in a table than will display on a single page, use the **Page** drop-down list, **Next Page** icon, or **Previous Page** icon at the bottom of the list to navigate to other pages.

## Forms

Pages that use form fields for entering data or changing settings have a logical tab order. The first options are the tabs that divide the form into different types of content. Typically, users do not see multiple tabs. You normally cannot open a secondary tab until you have filled in all the mandatory fields on the first tab. Mandatory fields are indicated with an asterisk (\*). The last options on a form are usually **Cancel** and **Save**. Occasionally, the **Save** button is only available at the top of the page and sometimes it is called something else related to completing the action, such as **Select** or **Upload**.



Some forms contain drop-down lists that automatically perform an action when an option is clicked or tabbed. To avoid errors, the first option in every drop-down does not perform an action. If you are using a keyboard, use Alt + Down Arrow to open the list, Down Arrow to move between options, and Enter to select an option.

Larger textboxes for adding content usually use the HTML Editor. The HTML Editor is fully accessible by keyboard. If you are using a screen reader you will be able to enter and format text, but you may have difficulty determining what text the formatting is applied to.

Many form pages contain links, which are not recognized as form elements by screen readers, for completing non-essential actions, for example, adding the original message text to a reply in the Discussions tool. Always check for links and form fields when filling out a form in the Learning Environment.


If a form is incorrectly filled out and you try and save it or move to another tab, a warning balloon displays next to the field with the error. If you are using a screen reader you must change your settings to read both the title and label of field prompts to have these messages read to you.

### **Help icons and Instructions widgets**

Many form fields have  **Help** icons next to them that explain what the fields are used for. These help links are not recognized as form elements if you are using a screen reader's form mode. If you have difficulty understanding the purpose of a field, check if there is a  **Help** icon next to it.

To get general help on the purpose of a page or tool, read the contents of the **Instructions** widget for the page. You can navigate to instructions easily using assistive technology by selecting **Instructions** from a list of headings.

### **Show/Hide**

Some pages contain sections that are collapsed by default. Collapsed sections contain advanced or supplemental information that is not required to complete standard tasks. To expand a collapsed section using a keyboard or screen reader, select the  **Show** or **Expand** icon next to its title and use the Down Arrow to read the content of the section.

## Search

Most pages that contain lists of items or users have a **Search For** field near the top of the page. To perform a search, enter a word or partial word in the **Search For** field and select the **Search** button. If you click the **Show Search Options** link, you can select advanced search options to restrict your search by. If you are using a screen reader, make sure you tab through the options to read them; some of the field labels may not be associated with fields correctly.

## Pop-ups

Many action icons and links open pop-ups for completing tasks. If you are using a keyboard or screen reader, use the Down Arrow and Tab keys to read the content of the pop-up. The last options should be buttons to close without saving or complete the task.

Error messages also appear as pop-ups. You will need to press **Ok** or a similar button to close them.

Do not use Alt + F4 to close pop-ups or pages. This action closes your web browser.

## Getting additional support

If you are having difficulty using the Learning Environment to complete your course work, consider seeking help from your organization's assistive services, or your assistive technology's help documentation:

- **Assistive Services** Many organizations offer support centers where you can get help learning new technology, tutoring for difficult course material, or advice on seeking accommodation for disabilities or different learning needs.
- **Assistive Technology** There is a wealth of assistive technology products available to help people use computers and the internet. A few examples include: special keyboards and mice, speech recognition software, magnifiers, screen readers, and Braille displays. Investing the time to find the hardware and software that is right for you, and then learning how to use it effectively, is worthwhile. Take advantage of help documentation and tutorials to learn commands, shortcuts, frequent tasks, and special tips.

## Appendix A: Addendum Learning Environment 8.4

As of Learning Environment 8.4 the Preferences tool contains an Appearance & Accessibility tab that includes options to set the font face and size for the user interface, as well as new settings that allow you to show secondary windows as pop-ups instead of dialogs and to turn off the HTML Editor.

Heading 1s are no longer used for widget titles. These areas use Heading 2 tags now, and Heading 1s are reserved for page names.

Error messages now display at the top of the page and provide links to each error.