Getting Started with Blackboard Instant Messenger

Frequently Asked Questions:

1) **Will my account or password be automatically set up?** No, all accounts must be individually set up. Blackboard IM is a separate program from the Blackboard Company – by law they cannot have access to our accounts database. For this reason your passwords will not be automatically synchronized.

2) **Will my classmates or instructors automatically show up in my IM?** Yes – to a point. All users – Instructors, Students, Teaching Assistants, etc. who are enrolled in a class in Blackboard Learn will appear in that class on the **Classmates** Tab in BB IM. They will NOT, however, show up in your Contacts list. Contacts must be added manually.

3) **Can I search for contacts?** No, this is by design to preserve privacy. You can, however, initially contact anyone enrolled in a class you are in through the People dropdown menu (Page 5).

4) **Can I add my Spouse/Friend/Significant other?** Maybe - Users may access Blackboard IM **ONLY** if they also have access to some version of Blackboard Learn. ALL users of BB IM must first have an account with an institution that uses Blackboard Learn for its courses.

5) **How can I add someone not in one of my classes?** In the Menu Bar of BB IM there is a People option. You can ADD Contact from there. You will need to know that persons Blackboard IM user ID. They will receive an invitation to allow you to add them as a contact. (Pages 5-6)

Getting Started with Blackboard ID

**Step 1: Account Creation**

1) Although this IS an Instant Messenger program being offered through the Blackboard Company, it will **not automatically use** your Blackboard Learn credentials to log in. They have no access to our passwords. This application is kept on Blackboard’s Company computers and is truly international in scope, so we need to set up our accounts individually.

2) To Set up your account:
   a. Log in to Blackboard Learn through MyRCC (Currently the listing simply says **Blackboard**.)

   b. On your RCC Tab, you will see a new module – **Blackboard IM**.

   When you see this module, click the Get **Blackboard IM** link in **Blue** at the bottom.

   c. This will take you to a new page – this will take a few moments - it is setting up your information based on your current Blackboard Learn login – **only** your **username** is being sent to Bb Corporate.
d. Fill in the information to Create a Blackboard IM account - see illustration for guide:

** We strongly recommend you use your VCCS ID as your Blackboard IM ID. You MAY, however, receive a message that your Blackboard IM ID is already in use. This is international; there is a slight chance that an ID with the same letters/numbers actually may be in use somewhere else in the world. If this occurs go ahead and create an alternate one for yourself. Click the Suggest More link for suggestions.

Step 2: Configure and Download the software
When your account is created you will be taken to the next page of the process. Use the illustration to help guide you through the next steps in the process.

Configuration
Once you have created your IM account, you can no longer access the account creation page. Thereafter anytime you click on the Blackboard IM link from INSIDE the Blackboard Learn application you will come to this page. This is where you can configure your account and download the software.

On this page you may change:
1. Your Password
2. Your Email Address
3. Your security Question
You may also select what classes you see in Blackboard IM. Your list will be updated automatically for every class you are enrolled in. If you no longer wish to see a class (after the semester is done) uncheck it here. (See Illustration).

**Installation**

At the top of the settings page you will see the graphic at Right:

A) If on Windows PC – Simply click on the **Download Blackboard IM** ideogram in the picture, or on the windows logo.

B) If on a Mac computer, you need to click on the Mac OS X icon.

Depending on your Internet Browser software and its security settings, you may receive one or more prompts for action to download and start the installation program.

Once downloaded, you the Blackboard IM Setup Wizard typically starts automatically and will walk you through installation. Again, however, this is very individualized, depending on your security settings you may need to locate and star the installation manually. Once complete, you can use Blackboard IM at any time.
Step 3: Running Blackboard IM

Configure auto startup (optional)
Blackboard IM usually sets itself to run on system start. You can configure this if you wish by clicking on Blackboard IM in the menu bar and then on Preferences. Many items can be configured on the Preferences screen.

If you turn off the auto start, you can start IM at any time simply by clicking on the desktop icon \(\circ\). Alternately look under the Start Button – All Programs – Blackboard IM.

Logging in:
When it starts, type your Blackboard IM ID in the appropriate box, followed by your password. Click the Sign in button to get started.

Please Note: There are two boxes that need attention
1) Remember Me: This box will populate your Blackboard IM ID and Password when IM starts but will NOT log you in automatically.
2) Sign In Automatically: This box will log you into IM the moment it starts and will not prompt for any information.

** Clear both of these check boxes if logging in from any public computer – including those at the campus. If you do not, it is possible for someone else to have control of your IM account.

Setting up your Profile
A recommended first step would be to set up your profile under BlackboardIM – Edit My Profile. This is also accessible under Preferences. This allows you to specify information available about you to other IM users.

1) You may attach a picture (yours or an Avatar)
2) Add your email address
3) Supply any other information about you (example: list of classes, or work title)
4) You can also set up a link to your webpage if you have one.

Using Blackboard IM
This works just like any other Instant Messenger Program, but has a LOT of extra functions – You can text chat singly or with a group, share your computer screen, or lead others on a web tour.

IM Tabs
There are three distinct tabs to Blackboard IM (right)
The Classmates tab is automatically created from your enrollments at your institutions and cannot be edited.

The Contacts list is fully editable. To add contacts, find people in the Classmates tab, and click the (+) next to their name. Under the People menu item you can even create
groups to organize your contacts. You can create as many groups of contacts as you’d like, and even have more than one copy of a single contact in different groups! (Alt- or option- drag to copy contacts)

To chat, call or collaborate with any user, simply double click their name.

The School tab is not editable but will be populated with Special Help Groups or Helpdesks from around the VCCS. To contact one of these, simply double click on the name when the icon shows they are available (Green Circle).

**IM Status**

You and other IM users may designate your current IM status when you are logged in. If you are not logged in, the default status will be Offline.

When you are logged in, the default will be Available. If you are busy, you can mark yourself as Away.

Any of the Custom options will allow you to add message text to your status. So, say you are in class. You can designate a Custom status to be “Away – IN CLASS” or any other text you want to add. Simply drop down your status selector by your name, and click Custom. Add your text and click OK.

**Advanced Features**

If you have ever used an IM program before, you are familiar with the text chat. This one goes beyond that. After you start the typical chat session you will notice the two buttons to the Right. Click the **Start a Collaboration** button to gain access to the collaborate tools of Blackboard IM.

The collaboration tools are:

1. **Screen Sharing** for real-time display of any document or application on your computer
2. **Whiteboard** to harness the power of visual instruction
3. **Web Tour** to share webpages

Anyone may initiate a Collaboration setting, and all participants may take part equally once initiated.

**Adding and Grouping Contacts**

The Contacts tab in Blackboard IM must be compiled by each individual. This is designed to be your personal contacts for often used groups or individuals.

There are two methods to add contacts: Classmates method and Add People Method.

To add a contact with the Classmates method:

1. Click on the Classmates tab
2. Find your class and the list of students
3. Click on the (+) icon beside the name of the person you want to add
4. When the icon becomes a smiley, the person is now in your Contacts.
To add a contact with the Add People method:
1) Click on the Contacts tab (actually any tab will work you will just be able to see it better here)
2) Click on People from the Menu Bar
3) Click on Add Contact
4) Type in the Blackboard Account name of the person you wish to add (note, as one of the Secure Privacy features, you cannot search for an ID of someone who is not a classmate, they must have given it to you).
5) Note: you have an opportunity to add the new contact to a group on your contacts tab
6) Click Add to complete the process.

Grouping contacts:
Your contacts on the Contacts tab may be grouped in any way you desire. Please note, a single user may appear in more than one Class on the Classmates tab, but can only appear in a single group on the Contacts tab.

Creating a Group:
1) Click on People from the Menu Bar (Illustration at top right)
2) Click on Add Group
3) Type in the Group name
4) Click Add

Moving a Contact to a group:
To move a contact to a group, simply click on the contact name, and drag the contact to the appropriate group.

For additional help with Blackboard IM, please see the ready-made reference resources at:

http://www.rappahannock.edu/helpdesk/blackboard/blackboard-collaboration/

http://library.blackboard.com/ref/be431ef8-1a8e-41f9-9c40-225fde30cc2e/index.htm