



## Communicating with students before and during course availability periods on Canvas

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### Canvas Course Start and End Dates

Instructors and students have different Canvas access dates, which are determined by the start and end dates of a course. Students can only access their Canvas courses on the first day of the term assuming the courses have been published. Please refer to [Canvas Access Dates](#) for specific start and end dates for each term.

You can connect with your students in a variety of ways before and throughout the course availability periods, two of which are Announcements and Inbox on Canvas.

**Note:** If you decide to communicate with students via Canvas Announcements before the beginning of the term, you will need to change the start date of your course.

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#### Can I open my course before the start date listed on the Canvas Access Dates website?

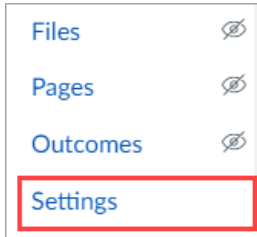
Although we would recommend keeping the course start and end dates aligned with the dates listed on the Canvas Access Dates, instructors can adjust the start date to grant their students early access to the course and to announcements.

**Note:** Please ensure to keep the end date of your course aligned with the centralized end date or it may cause confusion for students. All courses will conclude centrally according to the end dates listed on the Canvas Access Dates page.

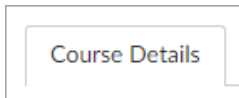
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## How do I change the start date for a course?

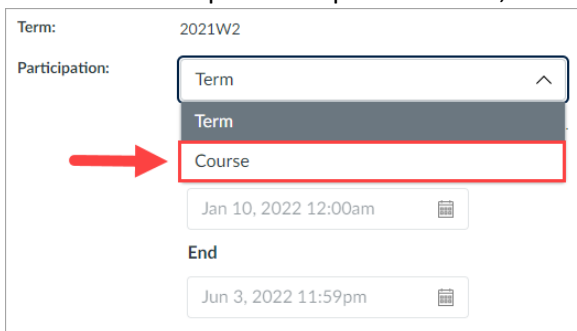
1. In your course, click **Settings** on the course navigation menu on the left.



2. Under the **Course Details Tab**, scroll down to **Participation**

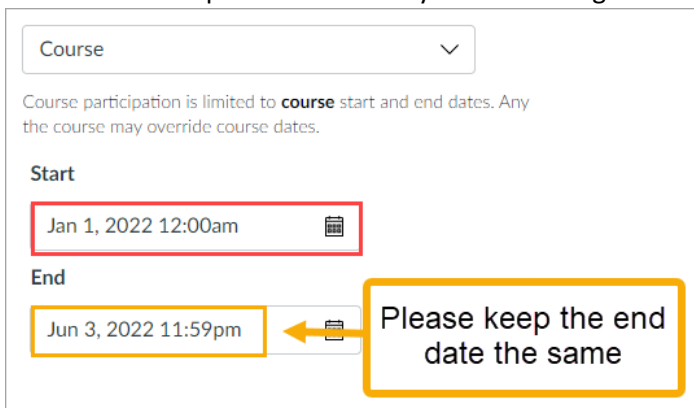


3. Under the Participation drop-down menu, select the **Course** option



4. Change the **Start Date** to your preferred date.

**Note:** Please keep the end date of your course aligned with the centralized end date.



## Canvas Announcements

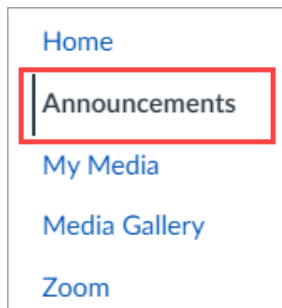
Announcements is a tool in Canvas that allows instructors to broadcast information and updates to all members of a course or a certain section within a course directly in Canvas. By default, students should receive notifications when new announcements are posted.

**Note:** The course must be published and open for students to access announcements. Courses typically open on the first day of the term. Refer to [Canvas Access Dates](#) for specific dates.

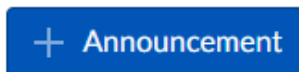
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How do I send an announcement?

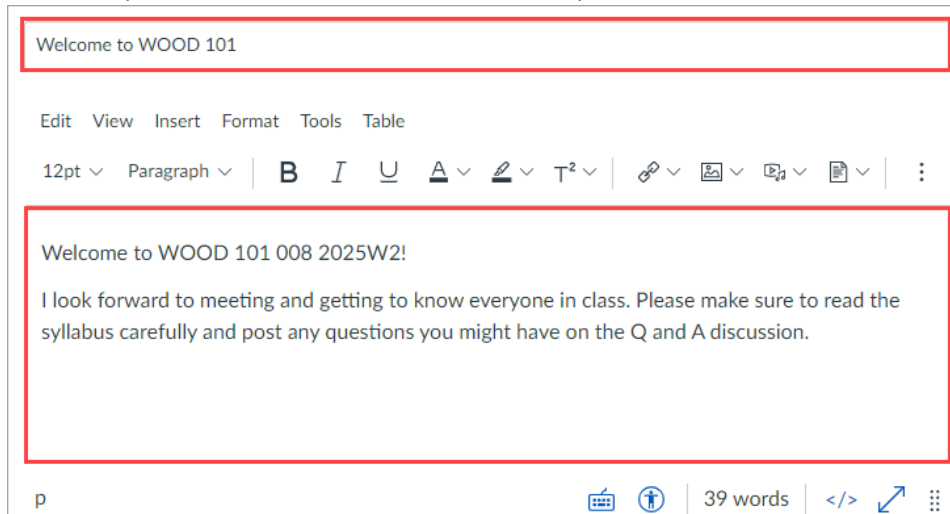
1. Click **Announcements** on the course navigation menu on the left.



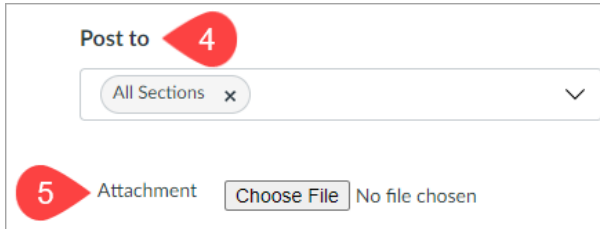
2. Click the blue **+ Announcement** button.



3. Enter a topic title and the announcement description in the Rich Content Editor.

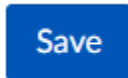


4. [Optional] By default, the announcement is posted to all students within a course. However, you may choose to post to specific sections.
5. [Optional] You may also include an attachment to your announcement.



The screenshot shows a form for posting an announcement. At the top, there is a 'Post to' label with a red callout bubble containing the number '4'. Below this is a dropdown menu currently set to 'All Sections' with a small 'x' icon to its right and a downward arrow on the far right. Below the dropdown is an 'Attachment' section with a red callout bubble containing the number '5'. To the right of the 'Attachment' label is a 'Choose File' button and the text 'No file chosen'.

6. [Optional] Check any preferred options:
  - a. **Delay posting** – select a specific date and time in the future to post the announcement
  - b. **Allow users to comment** – This option allows students to reply to announcements. Replies will be visible to all course participants.
  - c. **Enable podcast feed** – This option allows you to use a podcast feed to further disseminate announcement.
  - d. **Allow liking** – This option allows students to like a reply
5. Click **Save**.



## Canvas Inbox

Canvas Inbox (also called Conversations) is an in-Canvas email system. Inbox is a two-way messaging tool used to communicate with a course, a group, an individual student, or a group of students. Although you have one inbox for all your courses, you can filter by course and by section.

**Notes:** Unlike announcements, messages can be sent out and viewed by students prior to the course start date as long as the course is published.

Once a course has concluded and its term date has passed, you can no longer message students in that course.

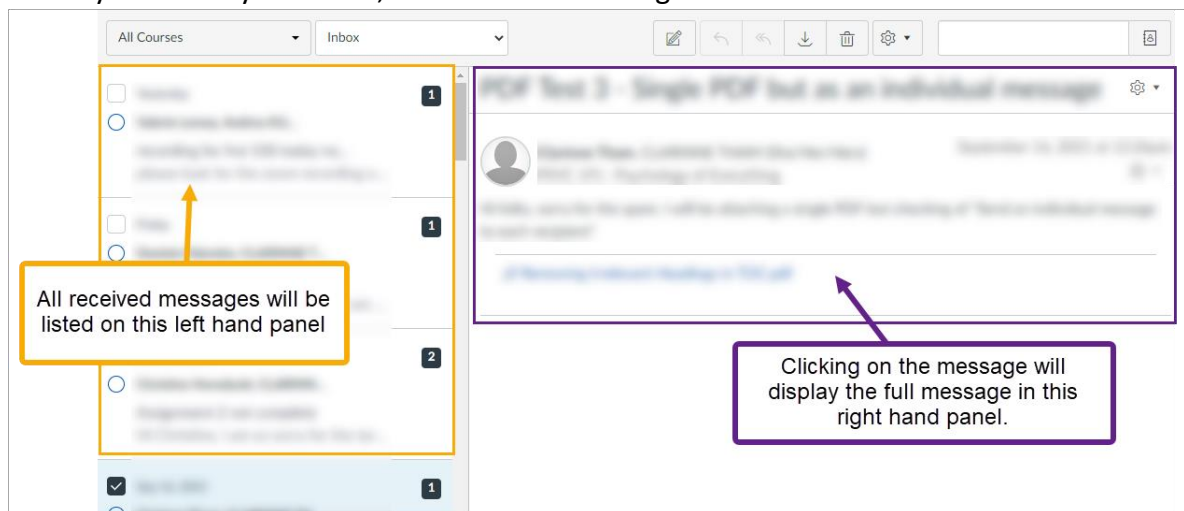
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How do I compose and send a message?

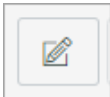
1. Click **the Inbox icon** on the left-hand global navigation menu.



2. When you access your inbox, it will look something like this:



3. Click **the Pencil Compose icon** at the top to compose a new message.



4. In the Courses drop-down menu, select the **course or group** you want to send your message to.

Compose Message

Course: Select course

Subject: Select course

- Favorite Courses
- More Courses
- Groups

5. You may either type a specific user's name in the To field or use the Course Roster.

Course: SandBox - Learning Support Team

To: |

Subject: All in SandBox - Learning Support Team (People: 14)

- Teachers
- Teaching Assistants
- Students
- Course Sections
- Student Groups

To remove a user from the To field, simply hit backspace on your keyboard or hover over the name and click the white X.

6. Compose your message.
- a. **Subject** – enter a subject line for your message
  - b. **Send an individual message to each recipient** – If checked, users would not be able to see who else was included in the message. Acts similarly to a 'Bcc'. If your message includes over 100 recipients, this checkbox will be selected by default.
  - c. **Message field** – include your message here.
  - d. Include an **Attachment or Media file**

7. Click the **blue Send button** when you are finished.

The image shows a 'Compose Message' dialog box in Canvas. The dialog has a title bar with a close button (X). The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Course:** A dropdown menu showing 'SandBox - ...pport Team'.
- To:** A text field containing 'SandBox - Learning Support Team: Students' and a small icon to the right.
- Subject:** A text field containing 'Reminder: First mid-term happening this Friday!'. A red callout marker 'A' points to this field.
- Options:** A checkbox labeled 'Send an individual message to each recipient' is present. A red callout marker 'B' points to this checkbox.
- Message Body:** The text 'Hi students, A gentle reminder that our first mid-term will be taking place this Friday. Please make sure to refer to our study guide and the discussions when you review. Remember to get some sleep prior to the exam and know that your potential is NOT defined by your scores. Take care!' is displayed. A red callout marker 'C' points to the start of the message body.
- Attachments:** There are icons for adding attachments and videos. A red callout marker 'D' points to the attachment icon.
- Buttons:** At the bottom right, there are 'Cancel' and 'Send' buttons. The 'Send' button is highlighted with a red box, and a red arrow points down to it.

## Additional Resources

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- [Canvas Community guides on using Announcements](#)
- [Canvas Community guides on using Inbox](#)