FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Collaboration is the key to innovation.

Dr. Sarah Fauque

Interactive Task Lists

Thank you, Dr. Fauque, for your willingness to share and collaborate!

Task Lists and Checklists

Task lists and checklists help students manage their workload and create order in a complex learning environment. Task lists maintain student focus on important learning activities and increase student accountability for completion. Using a simple task-based list can help students learn to break complex tasks into smaller parts, become accustomed to completing a series of steps, and remember key components of complicated or unfamiliar tasks. The use of task lists and checklists is an instructional design technique that reduces extraneous cognitive load. According to Cognitive Load Theory, extraneous load does not contribute to learning and only serves to reduce capacity by placing unnecessary demands on working memory. Along with reducing cognitive load, task lists and checklists can facilitate metacognitive development. By delineating and labeling the important operational steps of the learning process, a task list can be used to increase students' metacognitive awareness of learning strategies.

How are you using task lists in your course?

I am using task lists to help my students stay on track with all the components they need to do (or should do) before our meeting period. This includes reading assignments, discussion board posts, watching lectures, and submitting homework. As students mark off that they have completed or have started a task, I can track their progress. Click to view two screenshots: My Task Overview and Task Progress.

One challenge I encountered was how to create a task that would work for both of my meeting periods. I was hoping I could use the groups, but unfortunately, when one student checks off a task, it updates the status for the entire group. As a workaround for this, I put section-specific due dates in the task description. See two more screenshots: Task Description and Create New Task. I didn't require checking off tasks in my classes this semester because our students already have so much to do. However, I recommend it and tell the students that this tool lets me provide more helpful feedback if they are struggling.

What was your motivation for creating task lists in your course?

Our students have many more activities that they need to keep straight in every class. I thought that for our newer students this would be a helpful tool so they don't feel as overwhelmed. I know that some are getting lost on what exactly to do to prepare for our meeting periods because now our Blackboard shells are so heavy with content. It is tough for some of our students to prioritize their asynchronous work especially if they aren't accustomed to online courses. Personally, I like to cross things off of a list, and I know that many of my students are the same way. I was searching for a feature in Blackboard that allowed me to create interactive to-do lists. Low and behold "Tasks" are a thing.

The layout of the blackboard page is really efficient in that all links you need to access are on the side for you. I also really appreciate the task list because it will keep me very organized.

I like the layout and the organization of the course especially the check-off boxes.

I feel like the checklists at the start of each module will help me make sure I keep on track and don't forget something like a small assignment.

The check-off boxes and to-do lists make it so much easier. Thanks for going the extra mile Dr. F.

How have your students responded to the interactive task lists?

At the beginning of the semester student feedback was very positive. Now that we are moving into the meaty part of the semester, I have seen a drop-off of use. However, those who loved it at the beginning are still using it. They say that it helps them to feel like they're making progress in the course. The sticky notes that you see above and below are actual student feedback quotes.

Do you plan to use the Blackboard task list tool in future courses?

Yes. I think they'll be easier to implement in a class where everybody is meeting at the same time. Depending on the course, I may offer a tiny amount of extra credit if they use the task list all semester. That may encourage them to use it, and I think it'll also give me the incentive to check in weekly and track student progress more closely.

I really enjoy the use of the checkboxes. I think they will help me keep up with all of my tasks better.

I really love the "My Task" tab where you can see very easily what is left that needs to be completed.

TASK LIST TOOL

Bb
Blackboard

CLICK

OVERVIEW AND INSTRUCTIONS

LINDSEY WILSON COLLEGE