Designing Canvas Pages

When designing a page in Canvas, use the best practices discussed in this handout to make it visually appealing and accessible to all users.

Pages in Canvas is an open-ended tool that allows you to create webpages to suit your purposes. These can be edited only by you, the instructor, or can become a collaborative “wiki” type tool if you allow students to edit them. You can insert text, video, images, and links into these pages.

One use for pages is to create a customized homepage. In Canvas, you can set your homepage to a page you have created, which gives you a great deal of flexibility and customization. Your page must be published before you can set it to the homepage. Possible ideas for your homepage include:

- A welcome page, which could include:
  - A self-recorded video introducing yourself (especially useful for online-only courses)
  - Information on a timely syllabus item
  - A general course overview
  - Creating several pages that introduce various weekly topics; reset the homepage accordingly by week
  - A page with links to readings and other resources

General Layout & Accessibility Principles

Text
Don’t use massive blocks of text—keep your paragraphs short and separated to help readers easily process your content.

Headings
Make sure to use the heading styles at the top of the rich content editor for titles and subtitles. Using these will help both sighted and non-sighted users. Headings will also help establish content hierarchy and flow.

Links
When inserting a link, do not paste the entire URL or link to the words “click here.” Instead, directly link the words that describe the link destination—doing so will allow readers to immediately understand where the link will take them.

Example:
In his paper “American Politics,” Bob Smith says...

Other Typography Tips
- Use bolded and italicized text to distinguish important content.
- If you are setting your text to be a color other than black, be sure that the color is dark enough to still have good contrast with the background.
- Be consistent with your treatment of text. Use the same styles (fonts, sizes, font colors, alignment, etc.) to maintain a cohesive feel to your page.
Sample Page Design

Flickr Creative Commons image with text wrap and padding. Padding creates white space so that the image doesn’t butt against the text, which helps with readability.

Heading 2

Files link (note that the text describes what it is linked to)

Heading 3

Video embedded from YouTube and centered in the HTML editor

Heading 4

These Flickr Creative Commons images were arranged using float left in the HTML editor (rather than tables). When the page is resized to be smaller, some images will drop to another line, which is useful for mobile users viewing the content.
The Rich Content Editor

As with many tools in Canvas—assignments, announcements, etc.—the Pages tool uses a rich content editor. The rich content editor’s menu bar provides you with many options.

Suggested External Apps to Install

**TedEd**: A collection of quality videos that can be used for instructional purposes.

This app lets you search for and embed TED Ed videos in your course material.

**Flickr Search**: This flickr search tool lets users add free, public photos from flickr into Canvas via editor button integration.

**Google Charts**: Build and embed interactive charts, rendered using Google Charts. Populate the fields provided and see the chart update in real-time while building. Supports pie charts, bar charts, bubble charts, tree maps, etc.

**Public Resources**: Browse or search through multiple content repositories, including Vimeo, YouTube, SchoolTube, Khan Academy and Quizlet.

To learn about more apps, visit the Apps section of your course’s Settings page.
Image Guide

To place an image in a Canvas page, click the image of the tree in the menu bar. The pop-up window displayed below will appear:

- You will have the option to search Flickr’s Creative Commons, your Canvas Files, or to insert a URL.
- When placing an image, be sure to include Alternative text. This text will be read aloud to a person using a screen reader and will help with accessibility.
- Adjust your image dimensions as necessary.

Image Use: Best Practices

Create a Focal Point
Have one visual that is clearly the focal point of your page, which will help draw readers in.

Place Image Based on Its Content
Take into account where an image directs the viewer’s attention. For example, if a person in a photo is looking to the left, you do not want to place the image on the left side of your page—doing so draws the viewer’s eyes away from your content. If you place the image on the right, however, the image still directs your readers to stay focused on your page and is not visually jarring.

Use High-Quality Images
Do not use pixelated images or ones that have been resized to have incorrect proportions. For example, if your original image is only 100 pixels wide, do not increase its width to 200 pixels before placing it on your page—doing so will make it pixelated and reduce the quality. You may resize images to be smaller than their original dimensions, but never increase their size.

Use Relevant Images
Do not just insert images for the sake of having a visual. Make sure the images you use directly connect to your text by helping to illustrate it or explain it.
Add Padding (White Space) Around Your Image

It is highly recommended that you add padding. Without padding, your image will butt against your text. Adding padding, or white space, between the text and image will make reading easier for your users. Unfortunately, Canvas' editor does not have a built-in image editor to add margins and padding, so the method to do this outside of the HTML Editor is somewhat tedious. The steps are as follows:

1) Click the “Create Table” icon in the menu bar:

2) Create a three-column, three-row table with cell padding of 5 and spacing of 1, then click insert (see screenshot below):

3) Click the center cell of the table, then click the “Embed Image” icon in the menu bar (or the relevant icon for media you are adding, such as a video from YouTube). Then insert your image per the directions on page 4.

If you would like, use the cell above or below your image to type in a caption. Italicize or bold the caption to help it stand out from the rest of your text (see image above and to the right).

4) Use the directions on the next page to place your image and wrap text as necessary.
Image Guide: Placement & Padding

The following instructions will work for placement of both videos and images. If you prefer to work in the HTML Editor rather than the WYSIWYG interface (‘What You See Is What You Get’), please see the page 7.

Wrap Text: Align Left or Right
To wrap text around your image, click the image or video you want to wrap around. (If you have used a table to add padding to your image, then select the entire table and its contents, as shown below). Then, depending on whether you want it placed on the left or right, select the appropriate alignment button in the menu bar:

1) Select your image (or table and its content)

2) Choose alignment
Align Left  Align Right

Center the Image
As with align left or right, select your image or video and click the “Align Center” button:

Example of what a finished image would look like with padding added via tables and left alignment:
Image Guide: HTML Editor Method

Note: the following instructions involve HTML. If you are uncomfortable using the HTML editor, we encourage you to set up an individual consultation with an instructional consultant to help you customize your pages.

The following instructions will work for placement of both videos and images in the HTML Editor. If you are using these instructions for a video instead of an image, simply place the code within the <iframe> tag rather than the <img> tag.

Wrap Text
To wrap text around your image, you must click the HTML Editor link at the top right of your content editor. Once in the HTML editor, insert the following code within the <img> tag:

align="left" or align="right" (see example below)

```
<img style="padding: 10px;" src="https://farm9.static.flickr.com/8342/8188371874_b8211748b8.jpg" alt="Lil’ Bub" width="300" height="200" align="left" />
```

Add Padding to Your Image
Without padding, your image will butt against your text. Adding padding, or space, between the text and image will make reading easier for your users. As with text wrap, go into the HTML Editor and insert the following code into your <img> tag:

style="padding: 10px;" (see example below)

```
<img style="padding: 10px;" src="https://farm9.static.flickr.com/8342/8188371874_b8211748b8.jpg" alt="Lil’ Bub" width="300" height="200" align="left" />
```

Center the Image
Insert the following code into the <img> tag:

style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto; display: block;" (see example below)

```
<iframe src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/ekKUmaL2R2g?feature=oembed" width="320" height="240" style="display: block; margin-right: auto; margin-left: auto;" allowfullscreen="true" webkitallowfullscreen="true" mozallowfullscreen="true">
```

Float the Image(s) Left or Right
Inserting this code for multiple images that are next to each other will cause them to all float next to each other, thus placing them on the same line. It is recommended that you size the images to be the same height for them to line up well. Some images will drop lower in the page if it is resized to be smaller, which is helpful for mobile viewers. Insert the following code into the <img> tag:

style="float: left;" or style="float: right;" (see example below)

```
<img style="float: left; padding: 10px;" src="https://farm9.static.flickr.com/8305/7901501718_d9b1276d1c.jpg" alt="lil bub in grass" width="200" height="132" />
```

No padding vs. padding