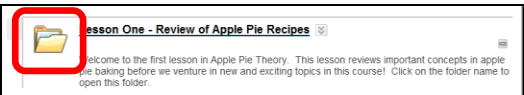
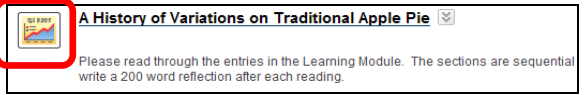
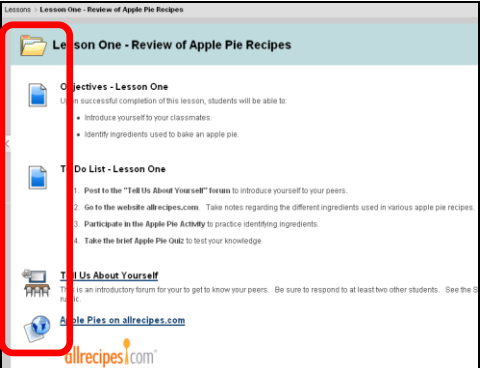
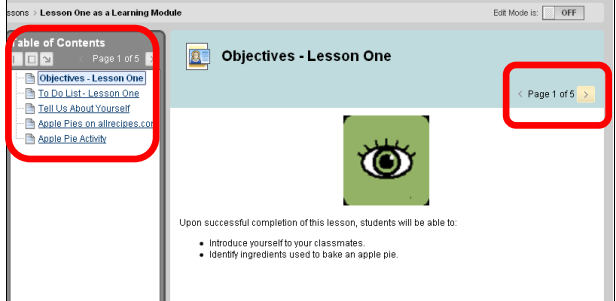
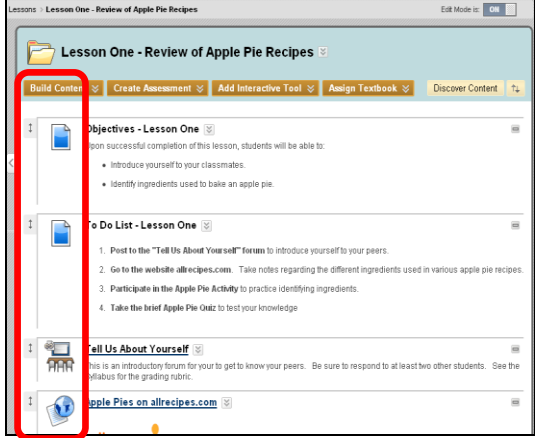
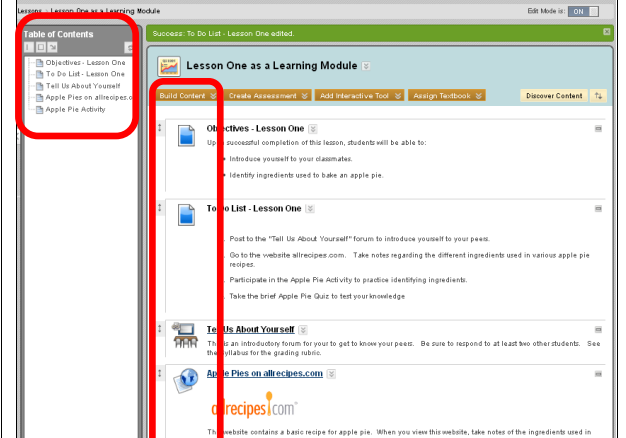
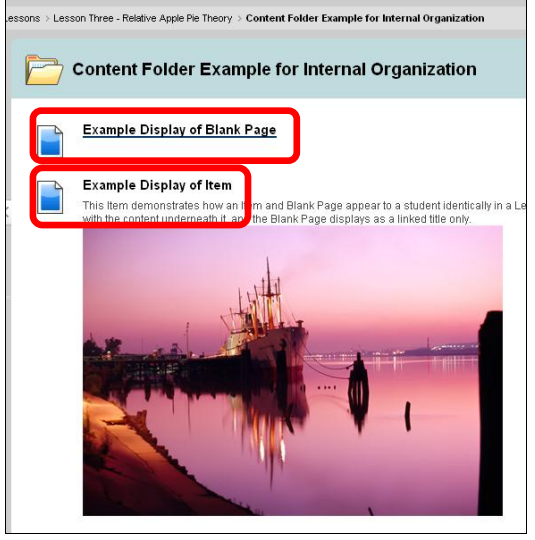

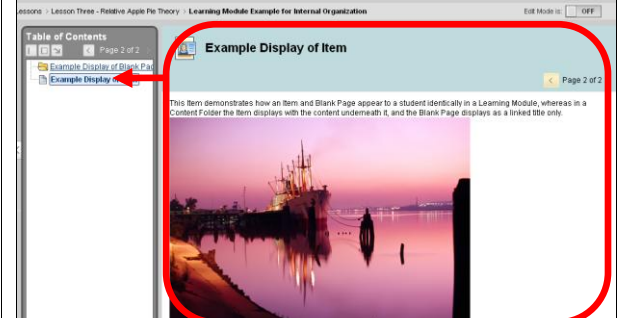


Best Practices: Content Folders and Learning Modules

There are many ways to organize an effective online classroom. Most instructors use Content Folders to organize content into smaller units that contain the objectives, “To-Do List,” resources, activities and assessments for each section of the course. There is a Content Type in Blackboard - the Learning Module - that offers some additional options for how to organize and display content. Each of these organizational methods has strengths and limitations, and using both in conjunction can often provide the best structure for student learning. Your choice of Content Folders, Learning Modules, or a mix of both will depend on how you want the student to experience the content. This document first explains the differences, and then moves on to recommendations for best uses of these two different organizational structures.

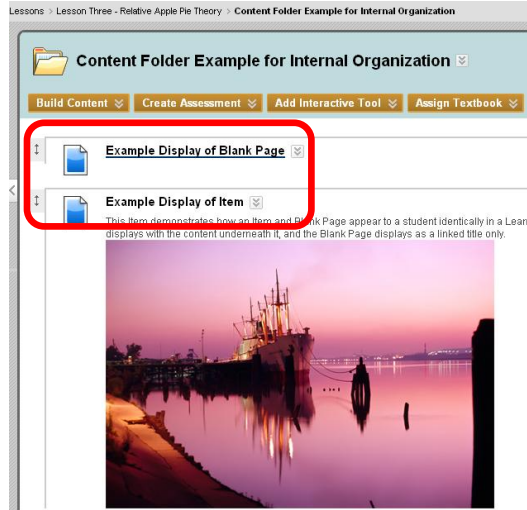
Differences: Content Folders Vs. Learning Modules

Element	Content Folders	Learning Modules
External Appearance	<p>Content Folders are displayed vertically on a page. The Content Folder title appears, and then any descriptive information displays directly underneath it. Note the icon.</p> 	<p>Learning Modules also display vertically, similar to a Content Folder. The Learning Module title appears, and descriptive information will be displayed underneath it. Note the icon.</p> 
Navigation	<p>Content Folders list content vertically. When Items, URLs and other content are included, the learner scrolls down the page to see them. If many Items, URLs, Audio or Video resources are added, the scrolling can become excessive. In this case, it may be helpful to arrange internal resources or activities in internal Content Folders, or to add a Learning Module into the Content Folder in order to better organize the course. Note the scrolling and the vertical display.</p> 	<p>The content in Learning Modules appears in a paginated fashion. The learner clicks through pages in a consecutive manner. This makes the Learning Module a great choice for content that learners need to experience sequentially. The Learning Module also automatically contains a Table of Contents that defaults to the left-hand side of the Content Area. This is helpful in demonstrating the internal organization of the Learning Module. Note the pagination and the table of contents in the screenshot below.</p> 

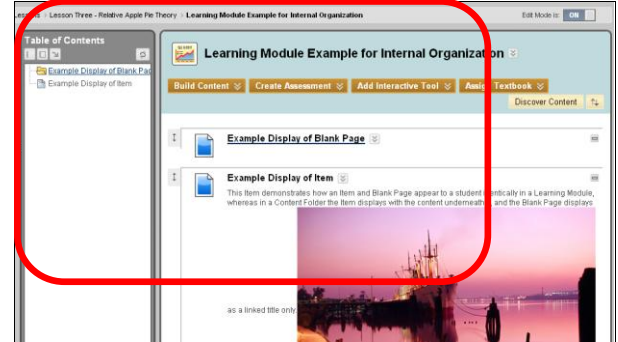
<p>Edit Mode On</p>	<p>Content Folders display in a very similar manner when the Edit Mode is on or the Edit Mode is off. The contents are shown vertically with the ability to edit, add, and rearrange the individual Content and Tools.</p> 	<p>When Edit Mode is on, the Learning Module will display as a vertical list with a Table of Contents on the left-hand side. Each Item, URL, Blank Page, etc., will appear in a separate area, very similar to a traditional Content Folder.</p> 
<p>Items and Blank Pages: Edit Mode Off (How a student will experience the course.)</p>	<p>Blank Pages and Items appear differently to students in a Content Folder than a Learning Module.</p> <p>When you add an Item, it displays as a title with content under it. When you add a Blank Page, it displays as a link to the page – just a title with no content under it.</p> 	<p>A Blank Page displays to the student exactly the same way as an Item displays when in a Learning Module. It appears as a separate “page” in the Learning Module.</p> <p>Blank Page:</p>  <p>Item:</p> 

Items and Blank Pages: Edit Mode On

In Edit Mode On a Content Folder shows Items and Blank Pages is similar to when Edit Mode is off.

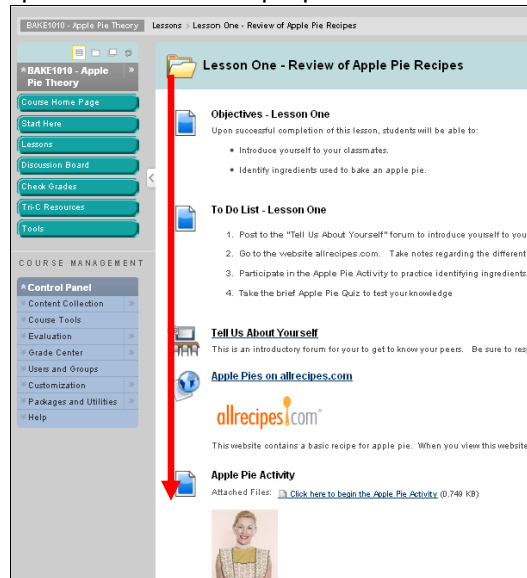


In Edit Mode On a Learning Module displays Items and Blank Pages in a similar fashion to the Content Folder. The content appears in a vertical display, but with an added Table of Contents on the left-hand side to demonstrate where within the lesson the contents are.

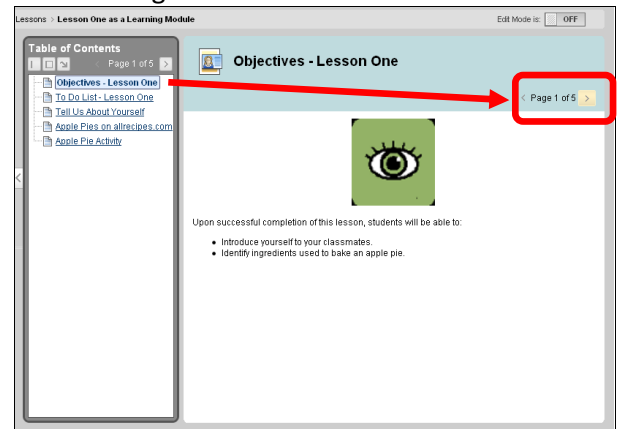


Length of Content

A Content Folder can hold many different resources, activities, and assessments. If a unit of instruction has a many resources, activities, and assessments, it is a good idea to either combine like elements into internal Content Folders, or to create a Learning Module within a Content Folder for a specific instructional purpose.



Individual contents of a Learning Module can also be lengthy. For instance, if an Item or Blank Page is added, that resource can have as much content as necessary, including lengthy text, graphics, embedded video, internal links, etc. Because Learning Modules display with pagination and a table of contents, it is a best practice to limit the length of the content on any individual page to prevent a student from both paginating forward and scrolling downward.



Recommendations: Content Folders and Learning Modules

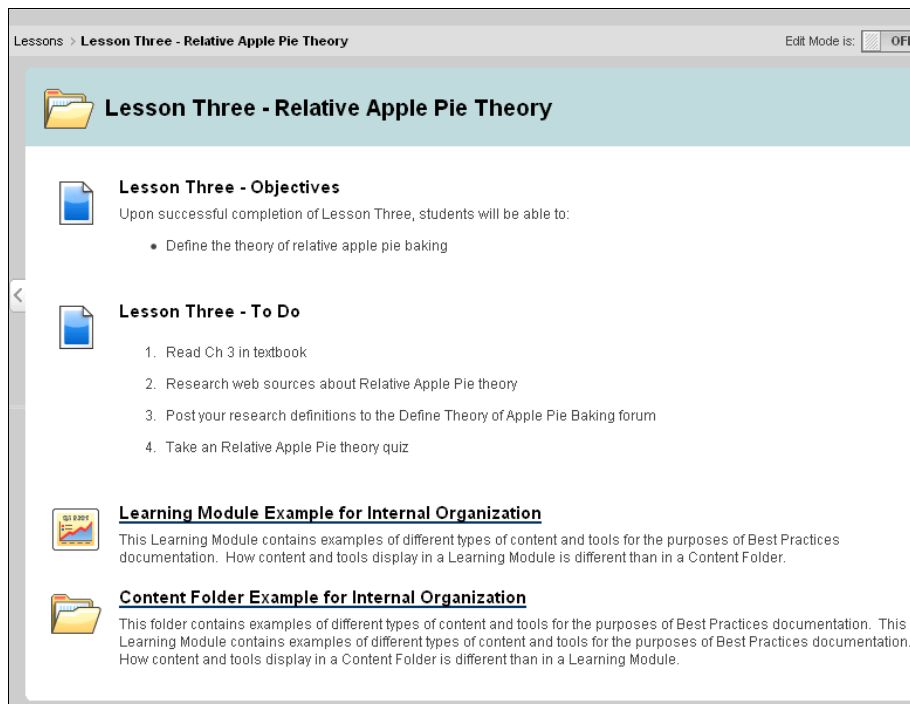
Use a Content Folder for:

- Distinct “units” of content that begin with objectives and a “To-Do List.”
- Units of content that do not require sequential experiences.
- Units of content that contain resources, activities, and assessments with 8 or fewer elements in each folder
- Smaller segments of like elements within a given Content Folder (if the larger Content Folder has 8 or more elements in it.) For example, a Content Folder might contain several internal Content Folders – one for resources which would house all the resources, one for activities which would house all the interactive activities, one for assessments, etc.

Use a Learning Module for:

- Units of content that require sequential experiences.
- Content best displayed by being “tied together” in a visual manner.
- Content with many levels in which the table of contents would be helpful for students to keep track of their location in the learning activity.

Content Folders and Learning Modules can be effectively used together for the best student experience.



The screenshot displays a web-based interface for a lesson titled "Lesson Three - Relative Apple Pie Theory". The interface is organized into a list of content items:

- Lesson Three - Objectives**: A document icon followed by the text "Upon successful completion of Lesson Three, students will be able to:" and a bulleted list: "Define the theory of relative apple pie baking".
- Lesson Three - To Do**: A document icon followed by a numbered list: "1. Read Ch 3 in textbook", "2. Research web sources about Relative Apple Pie theory", "3. Post your research definitions to the Define Theory of Apple Pie Baking forum", and "4. Take an Relative Apple Pie theory quiz".
- Learning Module Example for Internal Organization**: A document icon followed by a paragraph: "This Learning Module contains examples of different types of content and tools for the purposes of Best Practices documentation. How content and tools display in a Learning Module is different than in a Content Folder."
- Content Folder Example for Internal Organization**: A folder icon followed by a paragraph: "This folder contains examples of different types of content and tools for the purposes of Best Practices documentation. This Learning Module contains examples of different types of content and tools for the purposes of Best Practices documentation. How content and tools display in a Content Folder is different than in a Learning Module."