

To ensure a positive start for your course, the Sakai Help Desk staff has developed a list of best practices that ensure a smooth opening. These are the things that should be in place before publishing the course.

1. Your course site homepage should clearly indicate what a student should do upon accessing the site. This often includes a pointer to the syllabus and the Course Materials area if used.
2. Your syllabus should follow your departmental format and should appear in the Syllabus tool in Sakai. The syllabus is considered the contract between the instructor and the student and should not change over the term of the course.
3. Online courses should be substantially complete by the first day of class. This means that all readings are posted, activities are described, in-class meetings announced (if they will occur), forums built, etc. Exams may be developed as the course progresses to ensure they test content actually taught and/or meet course objectives.
4. All Sakai tools not used (such as Tests & Quizzes, Forums, etc.) should be turned off. To do this, go to the course's **Site Editor** menu item and click the **Edit Tools** button. Uncheck any tools you don't plan to use and click the **Continue** button followed by the **Finish** button.
5. The Gradebook should reflect ALL graded events leading to the overall course grade calculation even if the assignment has yet to be posted in Sakai.
6. All downloadable material not intended to be revised and submitted (such as Microsoft Word documents and Excel spreadsheets) should be converted to PDF for ease of downloading and benefit from the inherent compression gains of PDF documents.
7. If Microsoft Word uploads are necessary, they should be published as .doc (not .docx) to enable access by users not owning the latest Microsoft Office version.
8. The Course Materials tool SHOULD NOT present a series of uploaded, linked documents each as its own section. It is preferable to build out the context of a learning module (often done as a weekly section) with all linked documents provided in the context of how they should be used. If you're unclear so to what this suggests, contact the Sakai Help Desk at 503-494-7074.
9. Please remember that online tests are not visible to students when they are initially built in the Core Assessments area of the Tests & quizzes tool. They must be "published" and visible to the instructor in the Published Assessments/Active area of the tool.
10. If you have private forums, make them available to each group by ensuring that the student role is marked "none" and the correct group is marked "contributor"

Remember that you are not alone. The Sakai team is ready to help and is available 365 days/year!