

Blackboard Tips:



Inclusive Teaching in Collaborate Ultra Sessions

The Blackboard Collaborate Ultra tool allows for real-time, virtual class meetings. In either synchronous courses or classes using blended two-way delivery, Blackboard Collaborate Ultra brings the classroom experience to students wherever they may be. Instructors may share video, audio, your computer screen, a whiteboard, polls, raise hands, emojis, or chat.

Purpose and Applications

- To communicate effectively in synchronous (real-time) virtual meetings with the whole class, small groups, or individuals.
- To facilitate faculty to student and peer-to-peer communication.
- To bridge the digital divide and other barriers to belonging and inclusion that can be worsened due to isolation and separation in remote and online course environments.

How to Make Your Collaborate Session More Inclusive

Session Settings

- Use naming and profile pictures in Blackboard Collaborate to personalize participant icons and names in the participant lists. See instructions below for setting your Blackboard Collaborate profile photo.
- Remind students to type in their names if they join a session through a Guest Link and send you an email if they need to join the session via phone.
- Set your course sessions to allow students to enter 15 minutes early and set the end time for 20-30 minutes after the course ends. This allows students to chat with you or with each other informally after class, just as they would in a physical classroom.

Access Options

- Prior to a course session, send out an announcement/email to the class with any PowerPoint documents or links that you will cover in the session. Also include the dial-in number and the Guest Link in case some students need to connect while they are away from their computer and other course materials.
- In blended two-way delivery courses, invite face-to-face students to bring devices and log in to Blackboard Collaborate to enable them to work with remote classmates in break-out groups or contribute to chats or polls.
- At the start of your first session and any time you plan to use special features of the Collaborate Sessions, show students around the Collaborate screen, so they know the options for participating available to them.
- Remember to record all formal course sessions and show students how to access the recordings in case they had connection issues or faced interruptions during the session.
- Find out early if you need to caption the recordings for your students. You can appoint a

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student note-taker to caption during the session or work with Disability Services to use a quick transcription service.

Presence and Connection

- Especially early in the semester, communicate expectations that students join with audio and video whenever possible, then be sure to include a few activities that allow all students to respond to a question or prompt so each person gets to take the center screen during the meeting.

At the same time, recognize the need for flexibility. Students may occasionally need to log in around their children or family members or from a work breakroom where others file in and out of the room. Or they may simply have a very poor wifi connection or be at the end of their data plan. If they express reluctance about showing video either in a particular meeting or in general, be open to respecting their needs.

- Offer multiple ways for students to participate in the class discussion. Sometimes, ask a question and have students raise hands to register agreement. Have students write on a whiteboard or a file to make a concept map. Use the text-based chat feature for students who are reluctant about using audio or video. Do a real poll either in Blackboard Collaborate or in Poll Everywhere or do an “emoji poll” in the chat box to check on their status.
- Offer students opportunities to talk in small groups using the Blackboard Collaborate breakout-group feature. Give them clear instructions and an exact time when they will return. Then, remind them to exchange names before talking and to select a group member to report back to the full class. You can also pop into break-out groups to check on students who may need more support—just like in a face-to-face course.
- Keep an eye on the time, and build in an end-of-class activity, like a poll, a minute-paper, or a quick comment on a shared document to provide a clear end point to the session and clear guidance about what students should have taken away from the session. Such activities are great for students who need to watch the session later in a recording.

Most importantly, practice meeting in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra before you go live with your students. Pair up with a colleague or Center for Academic Innovation and Faculty Support staff. Or invite a family member or friend with a guest link to test out the Collaborate session settings. And give yourself permission for discussions to take longer than you anticipated. Remember, you can always send a follow-up announcement with the PowerPoint or a short video of yourself to reinforce concepts and clarify the main message from the session.

How to Use Blackboard Collaborate Settings to Promote Inclusivity

- Navigate to the **Blackboard Collaborate Ultra** through the main menu item.

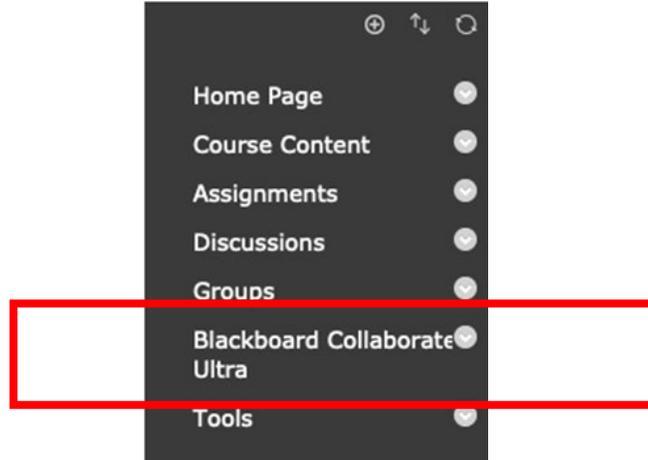
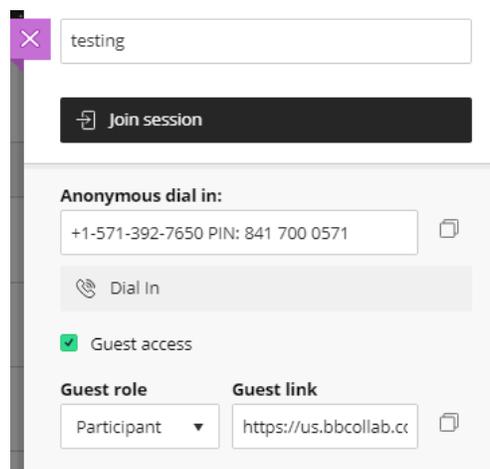


Figure 1 Blackboard Course Menu, Fall 2020

- Inside Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, select **Join Session** to get to session settings or [Create a Session](#) if none currently exists. Join a previous session by changing the end time or setting to no end time



- Once inside a Collaborate session, open the **Collaborate Panel** by clicking the purple button in the lower-right corner.

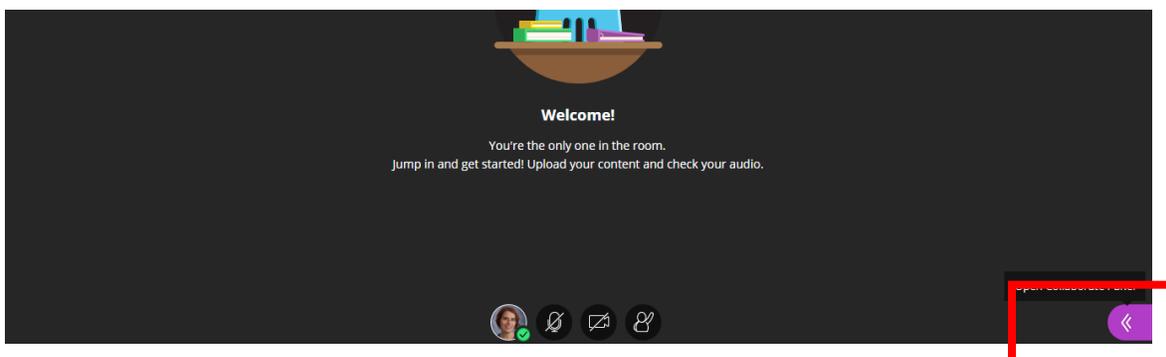
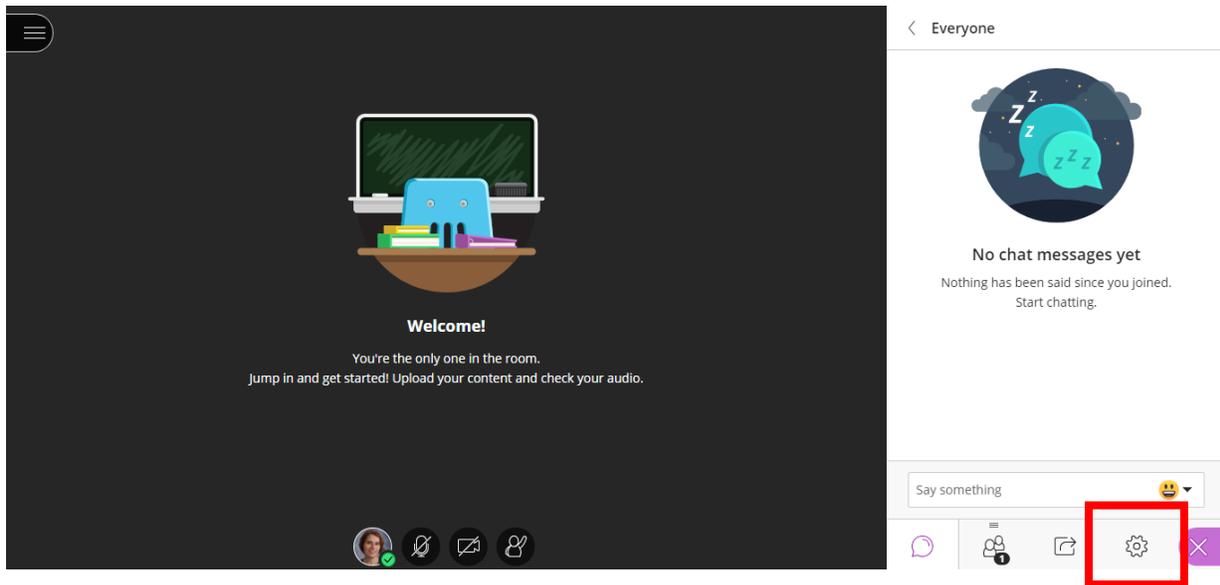


Figure 3: Blackboard Collaborate Session

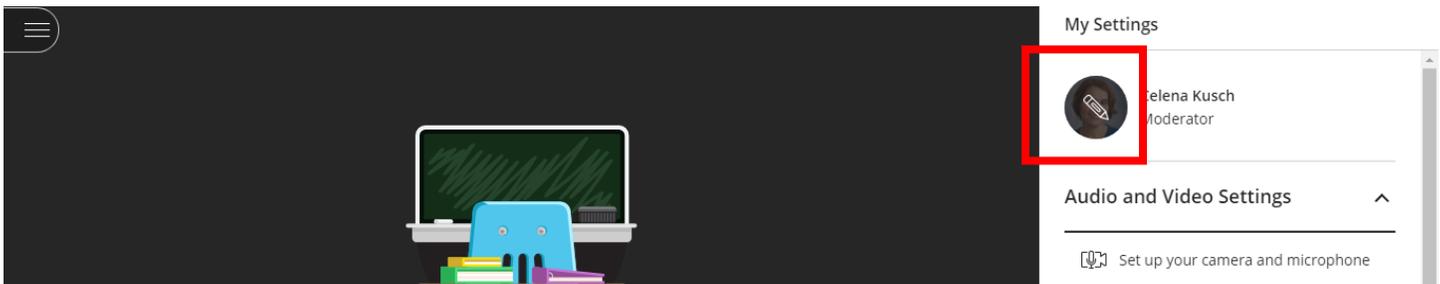
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Add Your Picture to Your Session Icon (one time only)

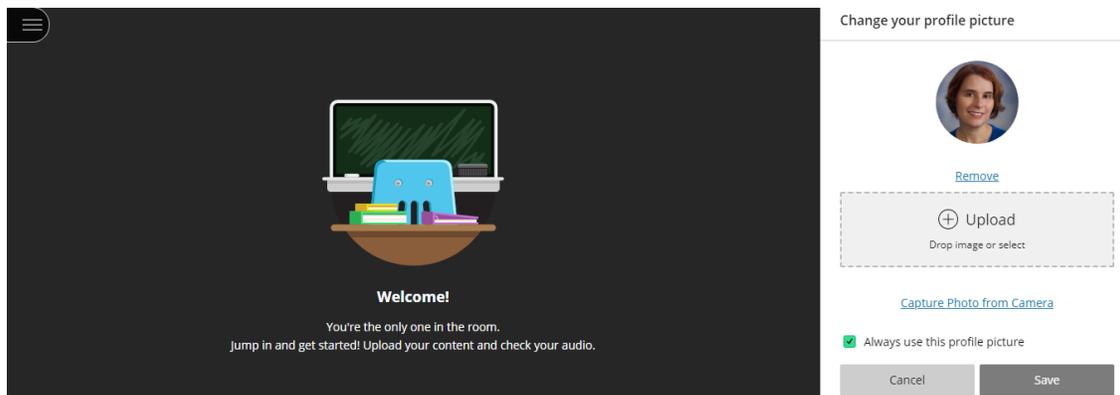
- In the **Collaborate Panel**, click the gear icon to get to **Session Settings**. Note: The panel opens in the chat window by default.



- Hover over the circle next to your name under **My Settings**. Click the pencil icon to personalize your photo.



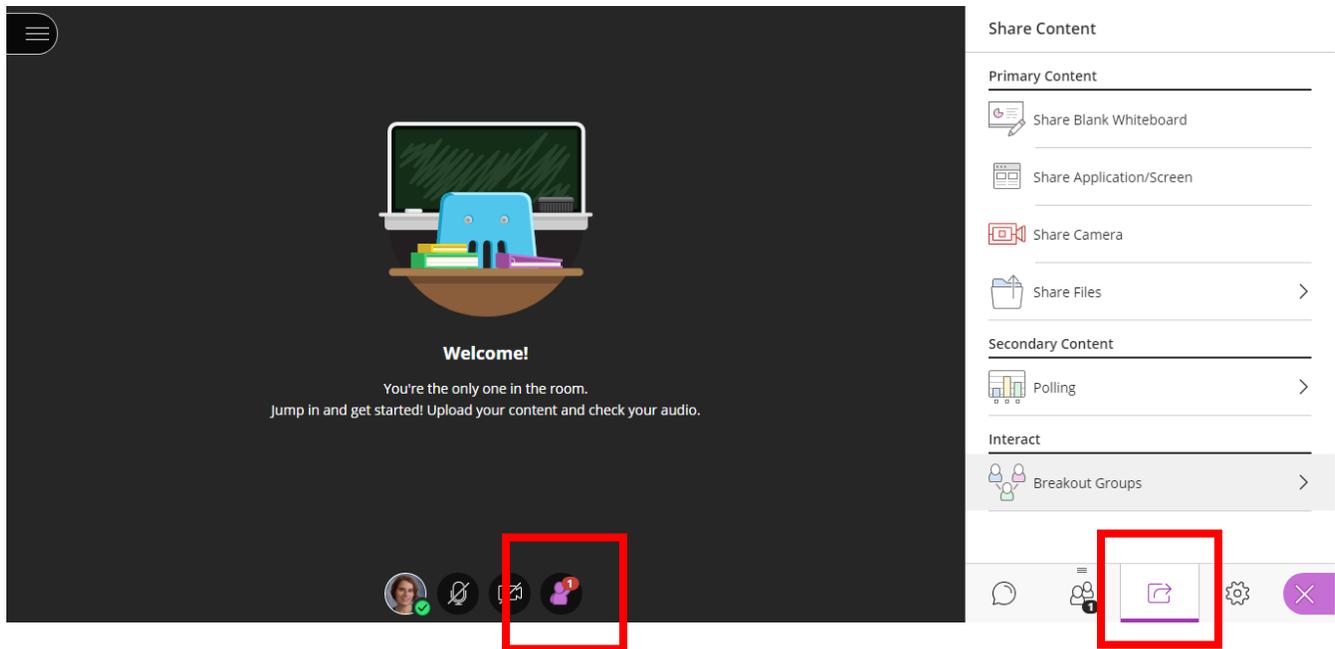
- Upload or drag and drop an image to customize your profile. Click **Save**.



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Use Collaborate Session Options to Engage Students in Multiple Ways

- Click the **Share Content** icon (a square sheet for a document with an arrow point outward). From this screen, select options for Polling, Breakout Groups, Share Files (and draw on them), Share Whiteboard (and draw on them), or Share Application/Screen. See details about all Share Content options in Blackboard Help for Instructors.



- For simpler interactions, ask a question and have everyone who agrees use the **Raise Hand** icon (See Fig. 7). You can see who and how many participants are raising hands by clicking the participants option (icon of people) in the **Collaborate Panel**.
- Use more advanced status settings, such as **Agree/Disagree** by clicking on your profile icon in the main session.

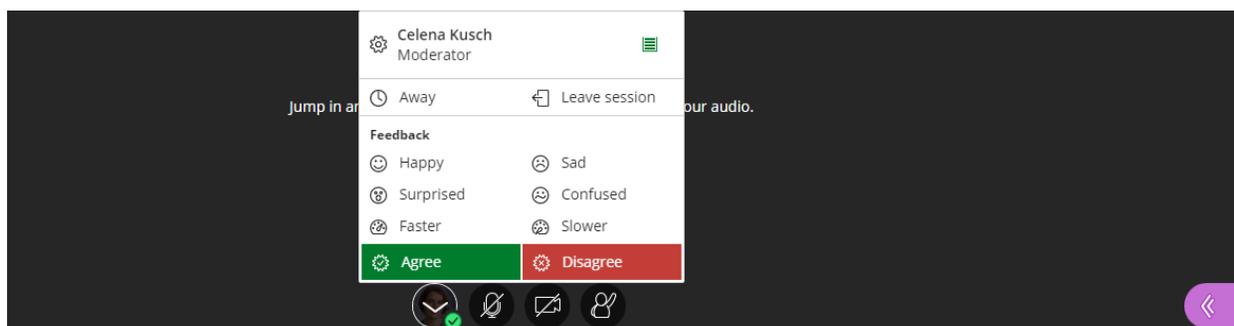


Figure 8 Status Options in Blackboard Collaborate Session

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- Use emojis in the chat window to applaud student-led presentations, do a quick emotional health check, or let students interact with less risk than using video or audio.

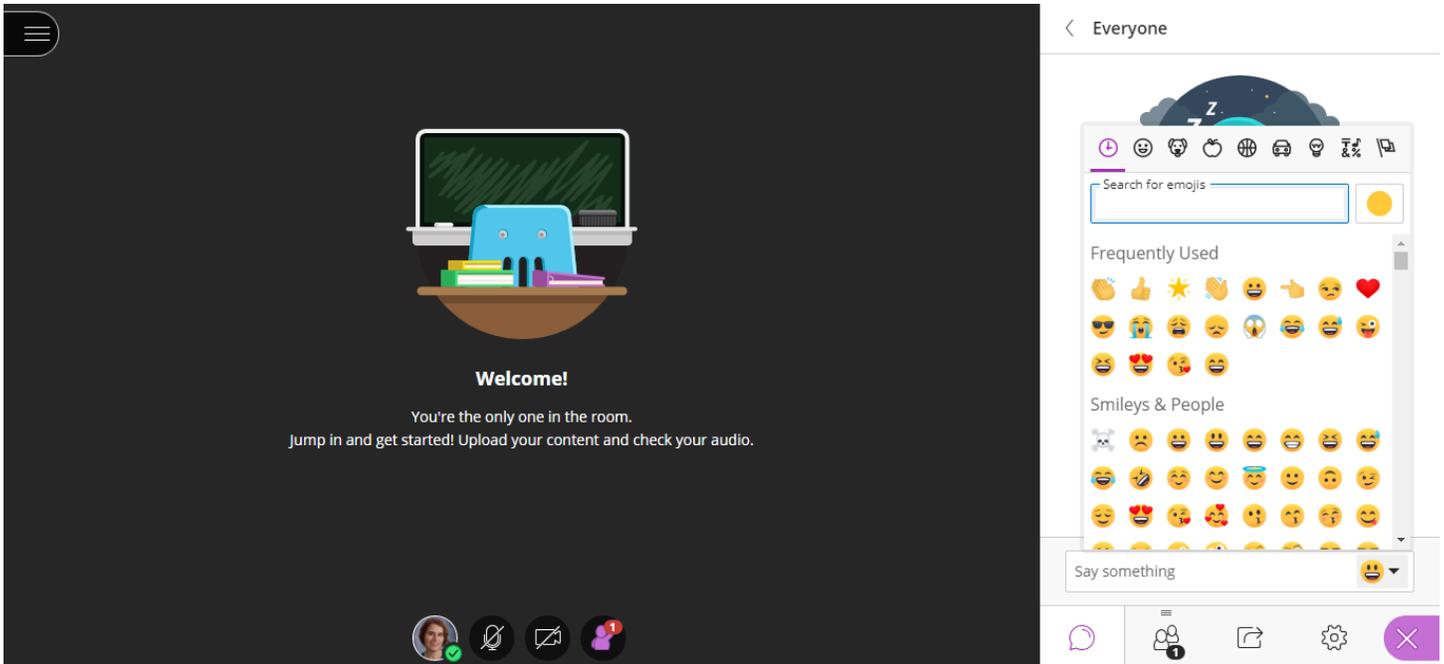


Figure 9 Emoji Options

- To increase ease of use when using chat or breakout group options, disable audio notifications to avoid sound interruptions when participants contribute to chat or breakout groups. Go to **Session Settings**, **Notification Settings** to and uncheck audio notifications and browser pop-up notifications.

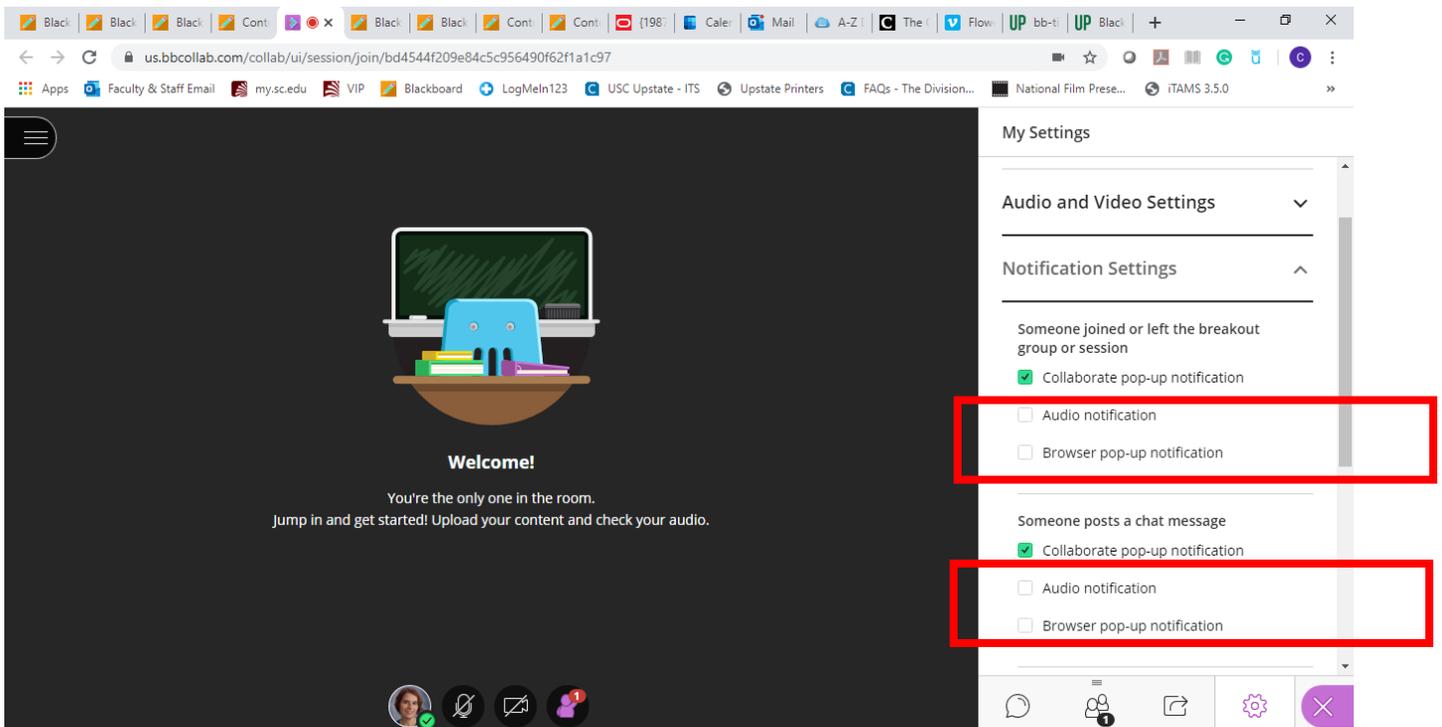


Figure 10 Notification Settings in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

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Additional Resources

- [Getting Started in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra as a Participant](#)
- Blackboard Tip: [Create a Session in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra](#)
- [Moderating a Session in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra](#)
- [Recording a Session in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra](#)
- Blackboard Tip: [Blackboard Collaborate Breakout Groups](#)
- [Using Break-out Groups in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra](#)
- [Manage Participants in a Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Session](#) (let students share files, lead a mini-discussion, etc.)
- [Sharing Content in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra](#)
- [Sharing a Whiteboard in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra](#)
- [Polling in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra](#) (instant polling)
- Blackboard Tip: [Polling with Poll Everywhere](#) (prepare one or more poll questions in advance)
- Blackboard Tip: [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Tools for Interaction](#)
- Blackboard Tip: [Take Attendance in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra](#)
- Video: [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Absolute Essentials](#)
- Student Tip: [Join a Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Session for Class](#)
- Student Tip: [Access a Recording of a Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Course Session](#)
- Troubleshoot: [Access Audio and Video](#)

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