

Ag Templates Guide – Course Introduction

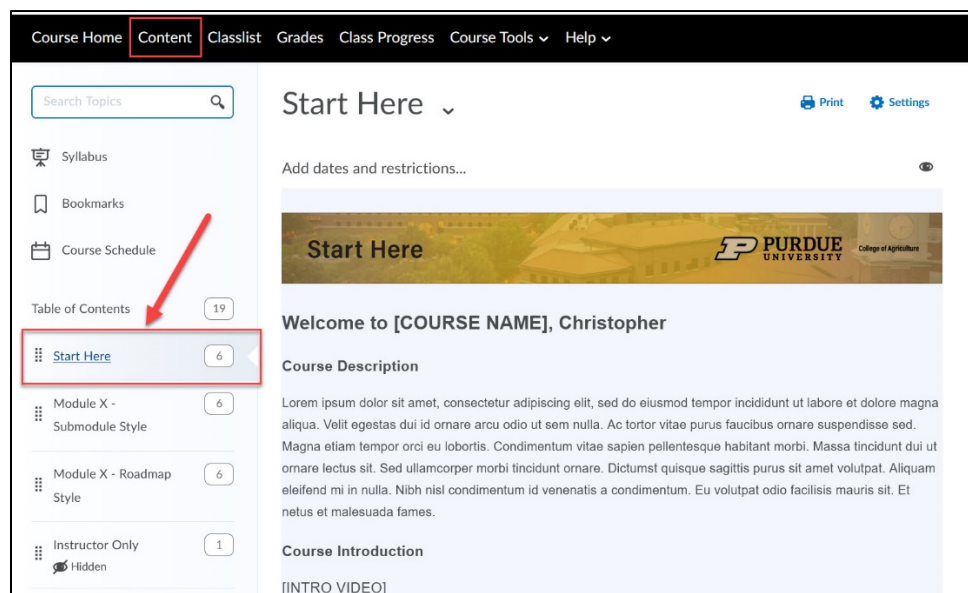
Getting Started

This part of the guide discusses the first steps for setting up your course, which includes setting up your course **Start Here** pages.

Step 1 – Customize your course’s Start Here page

Research indicates that a clear *Start Here* page is important for helping students orient to the course. This page should include several key items of information, including a profile of the instructor, course requirements and policies, technical requirements, course outcomes, and important dates. Having a page dedicated to this information in your class will give students an easy reference point for commonly needed information and help prepare them for success.

1. Find your course’s *Start Here* page by clicking the Content button and looking at Table of Contents list on the left-hand side of the page.



2. The area containing the banner, welcome message, course description, course dates, and course outcomes is called the **module description**. These are easily editable text boxes appearing at the top of every module. To edit this, simply click anywhere on the text to opens the editing dialog. To avoid missing any placeholder text, do the following:
 - a. Write a brief, one or two paragraph, course description. This often matches the one found in the syllabus.
 - b. If you have a short, 2-4 minute welcome video (recommended), you can insert it here using the Insert Stuff > Kaltura Media button. If not, be sure to erase the Course Introduction text.
 - c. Enter in your course’s important dates.

- d. Enter your course's course outcomes.
- e. Be sure to click the blue **Update** button to save your description text before moving forward.

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Placeholder text is often in brackets []. To quickly find and remove or replace this text, you can use "Find on Page" to search for brackets.

Step 2 – Checklist of Key Items

An effective *Start Here* page will have certain key elements to help the students get acclimated. Below is a quick checklist of items that the *Start Here* page should have, either in the module description or as an item. Most of these items are included in the template, but the list below will help you understand the flow and purpose of the *Start Here* page.

1. **Course Description** – Paragraph-long description of the course and its main topics.
2. **Course-level Objectives** – Often placed in the module description. These are the 4-5 main things that the students will know or be able to do by the end of the course.
3. **Important Dates** – For example, Midterms Exams, Final Exams, Course End Date.
4. **Course Introduction Video or Welcome Message** – A short video, audio file, or course announcement will help build rapport with students and make them more engaged.
5. **Instructor Profile** – Short bio, with a picture. It is often a good idea to include some personal details, such as hobbies or interests, to build a connection with students.
6. **Course's Technical Requirements** – Most courses require some sort of technology (at the very least an internet connection and a word processing program). Be explicit about the requirements both in the syllabus and on the *Start Here* page.
7. **Required Textbooks and Readings** – Be sure to include how the students will be accessing their required readings, particularly those that are being hosted digitally either on the LMS or on another site.
8. **Netiquette Guidelines** – Provide a short statement on the expected guidelines for online behavior. While most students already know basic netiquette rules, this serves as both a reminder and as a reference point when problems arise.
9. **Syllabus** – Brightspace has a specific location designated for the course's syllabus. At the top of the Table of Contents toolbar, there is a folder where the syllabus can be uploaded. Some instructors also place a link to the syllabus on the *Start Here* page.

