Maple T.A. Blackboard-Edit Solutions

The Problem

The Edit option
For most Blackboard content items, clicking the Edit option in their context menu will display the Edit Item page, which allows one to change the item's name and text, among other things.

Many instructors and instructional designers would like to be able to edit the Maple T.A. content item to add instructions for students; for instance, to add the direction: “Please read Chapters 1 through 3 before taking this quiz.”

The Edit Item page
Unfortunately the default function of Maple T.A.’s Edit option does not take you to this page. Instead it takes you to the Assignments page in Maple T.A.

For years we have been able to (without much difficulty) reprogram the Maple T.A. building block so that the Edit option works the way we want it to. But changes in the latest version of Maple T.A. have made this modification prohibitively difficult. We would need to create a new building block from scratch – which would be time consuming and costly.

I have been pestering Maplesoft to change the way the Edit option works – or to add another option that does what we want. But in the meantime, we need a way to deal with the inability to edit the Maple T.A. content item.
Overview of Possible Solutions

In the pages that follow, I will describe three “solutions.” The first two solutions are simple, and the summaries below should be sufficient for understanding how to implement them.

The third solution shows you how to construct the URL for editing a Maple T.A. content item. Not only does this allow you to edit that content item, but from that point on you will be able to edit the content item using the Edit option.

Solution #1
The first solution is to place a content item at the top of the content area containing your Maple T.A. assignments, and this content item should have a name like “Quiz Instructions” and should list the quizzes and the instructions for each.

(Note: The latest version of Blackboard is terrible at formatting text. To get a blank line between paragraphs, you will need to type a space on the blank line – otherwise Blackboard will ignore it.)

Pros: All instructions are contained in this one content item.
Cons: The instructions are visually disconnected from the assignments themselves, making it easy for student to overlook them.

Solution #2
The second solution is to put each Maple T.A. assignment in a content folder, with the instructions being attached to the folders.

Pros: There’s a stronger connection between an assignment’s instructions and the assignment itself.
Cons: You have to create and maintain a lot of extra things – one content area per assignment. Also, once the student navigates into a folder to access the assignment, the instructions can no longer be seen.
Solution #3

Not only will this hack allow you to edit a Maple T.A. content item, but from then on you will be able to edit that content item using the Edit option.

The gist of this hack is that you will obtain the URL for editing a non-Maple T.A. content item, and then you will replace the content_id with the id of the Maple T.A. content item you wish to edit.

To begin, mouse-over any non-Maple T.A. content item and click its item options button.

Right-click the Edit option, then select Copy link address.

You have just copied the URL for editing this particular content item.

Click in your browser’s address field, right-click and select Paste.

You could now press enter to take you to the URL that would let you edit the selected content item. But this is not the content item you wish to edit.

Now mouse over the Maple T.A. content item you wish to edit, click its item options button, and then mouse-over the Edit option.

Important: Just mouse-over, do not click.
Look in your browser’s status bar for the URL for editing this content item. Look for the value of `content_id`. Remember this number.

Alternatively, you COULD right-click the Edit option, then paste the URL into a Notepad document, then select and copy the `content_id` value.

Click in your browser’s location field again, then click to the right of the `content_id` value. Change this value to the `content_id` value of the Maple T.A. content item you wish to edit.

Press Enter.

Viola! You can now edit the description of this content item!

Once you submit your changes, you will notice that the icon for this content item has changed – from an open book showing a red X and a green check mark, to a blue page. Any Maple T.A. content item with a blue page icon can be edited by clicking the Edit option in its item options menu.

*Once you become proficient with this hack, you will be able to perform it in 15 to 20 seconds per content item.*