Maple T.A. Tips and Tricks

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Getting Started

- Log into Blackboard
- Select your class
- Click Control Panel
- Click Maple T.A. Instructor Menu
- Select *DEFAULT TEMPLATE*

Templates

- A template is a Maple T.A. class that is set to “featured,” making its content inheritable
- A Maple T.A. class’ template is selected at the time of class creation only and is permanent
  - Don’t choose the default template if you later plan to set up your own template
  - Don’t choose something other than the default template out of curiosity
  - Create your template class first (doesn’t need to contain content), then the child classes
- The template is also known as the “parent” – the class based on the template is the “child”
- A child class inherits all of the content of the parent, but can also contain its own unique content that is not seen by the parent or other child classes
- Use when there are multiple sections of a class and all will be using the same question banks and assignments
- Inheritance persists even after the template stops being “featured”
- “Featured” classes are available to everyone
- To keep others from using your template, only set it to “featured” for the few minutes it takes to set up your child classes
- In a child class, modifying an inherited question bank or assignment will break the link to that question bank or assignment in the parent
  - Once the link is broken, changes made in the parent will not be inherited by the child
  - The link to the parent can be restored by deleting the modified question bank or assignment in the child
- **Only make changes to the parent class**
- Two options for handling templates that will be used every semester...
  - Set up a new template each semester by downloading the content from the previous template and uploading it to the new template
  - Contact WBA about getting a persistent Blackboard class to house the template
- All classes are descended from the default template and so will contain two sample question banks – one from Maplesoft and one from WBA
Question Banks

- Structure according to how they will be used – assignments can choose a subset from each question bank topic, so...
  - Divide topics by subject area
  - Divide topics according to question difficulty – so that assignment randomization doesn’t cause one lucky student to get only the easy questions while another very unlucky student gets only the difficult questions
  - Divide topics by both subject area and difficulty – enabling your exam to consist of one easy question on reptiles, one medium question on reptiles, and one difficult question on reptiles, repeated for each subject area
- Multiple choice and true-false are most common question types – good for beginners
- Look at the questions in the sample question banks
  - **Don't forget to save your question bank after you make changes**
    - mouse-over Actions
    - click Save Question Bank
    - click OK if the question bank already exists or type a name and then click OK
- Consider these anti-cheating techniques...
  - Create a large pool of questions from which a small subset will be chosen by the assignment
  - Use more advanced techniques to create dynamic questions that employ algorithms and random variables
  - Dynamic questions on a budget (no algorithms): Create a number of subtle variations of the same question within a topic, create an assignment that chooses one variation at random

Assignments

- Use **Add as Group** to choose subsets of topics – good anti-cheating technique, as no two students will get the same assignment
- Practice assignments aren’t scored – don’t use if you want to know what your students are doing
- Don’t overuse proctored assignments
  - Three or four quizzes, plus a mid-term, plus a final = good
  - Weekly quizzes = Testing Center won’t be able to handle the demand
- Using “restrict feedback until” is a good anti-cheating technique
  - Restricting feedback until after the deadline has passed will prevent students from sharing answers until doing so is no longer a benefit
  - Keep in mind that restricting feedback will be most effective for new assignments – assignments that are reused each semester will undoubtedly have printed copies in circulation
  - The best anti-cheating technique is to use proctored assignments that restrict feedback until the year 2050 – however, this denies students the opportunity to learn from their mistakes
- Maple T.A. tries to protect you from yourself by locking assignments that are in-use by students
Most likely, if you discover an error in an active assignment, you will not be able to make corrections.

NEVER make changes to an active inherited assignment — this will “erase” existing scores.

Assignments do not show up in Blackboard until they have been added to Blackboard.

- Go to the desired content area
- Click Edit View
- In the Select drop-down menu, click Maple T.A. Assignment and click Go
- Select the assignment to be added and click Submit
- Immediately set dates of availability via Adaptive Release (click Manage)

It is highly recommended that you do not set dates of availability via the Maple T.A. Assignment Editor — use Blackboard’s Adaptive Release rules instead (click an assignment’s Manage button while in Edit View mode within a content area)

- Reduces the problem of not being able to modify an assignment once it is in use
- Allows you to give an extension to one or more students without having to wait for the current deadline to pass
- Allows you to give different extensions to different students
- Allows you to create different deadlines for different child classes without breaking the link to the parent assignment
- Reduces the problem of “losing” grades due to modifying an inherited assignment

Website Editor

- Use the website editor to upload GIF and JPG graphic files ONLY
- To link to PDFs or Powerpoints...
  - Upload PDF or Powerpoint to a Blackboard content area, copy its URL, add a link to the document in the assignment (start at the step below for instructions on adding a link to an assignment)
  - If you only want these documents to be available to students while they take a proctored exam, link to documents that have been uploaded to a hidden content area...
    - Click Control Panel
    - Under Course Options, click Manage Course Menu
    - Click the +Content Area button
    - Enter a descriptive name – i.e., “Course Documents (Exams)” or “Exam PDFs”
    - Deselect the Available for Student/Participant users checkbox
    - Click Submit
    - In the breadcrumbs, click Control Panel
    - Under Content Areas, click your new content area
    - Click the +Item button
    - Enter a name for the document
    - Under Content, to the right of Attach local file click the Browse button
    - Browse to the document you wish to upload and select it
    - Click Submit
Mouse-over the link to your new document, right-click and select **Copy Shortcut**
In the breadcrumbs, click **Control Panel**
- Click **Maple T.A. Instructor Menu**
- Go to **Assignments** and edit your assignment
- Under the **Choose Name** tab, click the **Advanced** button
- In the **Text to show at the head of each page** panel, click the **Source** button
- Type the following HTML code (press Ctrl-V after the first double-quotes to paste the copied URL, and replace **Display Name** with the name of the document as you want it to be displayed in your exam):

```html
<a href="http://my.url/document.pdf" target="_blank">Display Name</a>
```
- Click **4. Review and Finish** and click **Finish**