

Contact Students **Before** the First Day of Class

In preparation of the start of the semester, reach out to your students. Make sure to do this at least **one week** before the first day of class.

Why are we doing this?

After speaking to our students and asking them how we can better support their needs, many asked for this form of communication.

Research shows that this type of communication helps online students feel better prepared to start the semester.



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What can be included in a welcome message:

- Class Syllabus
- To establish weekly routines if any.
- Contact information
- Important things they'll need to know for your class
- Reply policy: How long they could typically expect to wait to hear back from you.
- Schedule if applicable: Example weekly assignments always due on the same days, etc.

[How to message ALL students at once from
Cougar Tracks](#)



Important Pre-Course Contact tip!

It's recommended that all initial messages sent to students, be sent via [Cougar Tracks](#). Not all students realize how to access their Canvas accounts, therefore they would not receive the message sent from within Canvas. It is important to email **outside of Canvas (CMS)**.

Example 1 Short and Sweet

Example Message 1— Welcome

We are using the Canvas course management system for this course. Please see the [\[your school's Canvas help page\]](#) webpage, which provides instructions for logging in, finding your course, and confirming your email to receive Canvas notifications.

Your first due date for this course is [\[date/time\]](#). I recommend that you log in to Canvas now to read the Syllabus and participate in the Check-in Discussion, which is in the Modules area of the course. The course navigation menu includes links to the Syllabus and to Modules.



Distance Education

Going the Distance for our students!

Example 2

The More the Merrier

Example Message 2— Welcome



Good afternoon, and welcome to your **[your course title]**!

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My name is **[your name]** and I will be your instructor for the course. I am looking forward to a terrific semester with you.

I want to welcome everyone, and I would encourage you to post a short informal hello message in the "Introductions" discussion forum to let me know you received my welcome message, and to briefly introduce yourself to your fellow classmates.

Although the official start date for the course is not until **[date]**, all students (who have officially registered) now have access to the **[course name]** Canvas course site, so feel free to start exploring our online learning environment. All details of the course can be found within the online course site, syllabus and modules. I also wanted to take a moment to post a couple of points as we get started. [Login page for Canvas](#)

This course will have regular weekly assignments due, weekly online discussions forums, as well as readings and course materials. This is not a self-paced course—it's important that you keep on top of the weekly reading and assignments!

Each of you must manage your own time each week to know when assignments, and any other weekly course obligations, are due. This will involve regularly logging into Canvas to check discussion forums and communications, monitoring your campus email address, and virtually interacting with classmates, team members, instructors, and course materials.

At this point, I suggest the following actions:

- Log into Canvas [\[link to your Canvas log in page\]](#) and begin to familiarize yourself with the Canvas learning management system and the **[your course title]** course site
- Make sure you've confirmed your email address in the Canvas system so you can receive messages and announcements I'll be sending
- Check out your Canvas Calendar for assignment due dates so you can plan your semester accordingly. You can access the Calendar from the left-hand global navigation bar.
- Submit your first assignment—introducing yourself in the Check-In Discussion—by **[day/time]**.
- Read through the Syllabus [\[link to your Syllabus\]](#) so you know the rhythm of course, and what is expected.

As you get started, I'm happy to answer any questions that may arise, or point you to our tech support for more technical questions. Please post your specific questions about the class in the Getting Started forum **[or whatever your Q&A discussion is called]**. I will send a Lesson 01 announcement on Monday, the official course start date.

I look forward to working with you this semester and getting off to a strong start!

Best,
-your name



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