



Getting Started with Moodle: Student Guide

Introduction

Moodle is a Learning Management System (LMS) – software developed to augment traditional learning methods, enabling instructors to enhance their students’ learning experiences or replace traditional face-to-face classes with online instruction. It was originally designed by an educator to engage learners and promote collaborative, student-centered learning. Moodle is like an interactive website for your class material with many features and activities that enhance both teaching and learning.

“Moodle” is an acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. The word “moodle” is also a verb that describes the process of lazily meandering through something, non-purposefully, doing things as they occur to you, or enjoyable tinkering often leading to brilliant insight and creativity – eureka moments.

At Saint Martin’s University, Moodle is used in the following ways:

1. Partnered with a traditional, face-to-face classroom setting
2. As part of a hybrid class - 50% or more of the class is in the classroom, the rest online
3. Exclusively in a class taught completely online

In this guide, we will explain the basics of using and interacting with Moodle. It is assumed that users have a basic familiarity with computers and are able to navigate the Internet, create and read files using Microsoft Word or a comparable word processor, open and interact with PDF files, and access Saint Martin’s University email.


When using Moodle, it is critical that your SMU email account is regularly checked. Your instructors will be communicating with you through Moodle and many Moodle features are directly linked to your email. Most instructors will expect you to check your SMU email daily. Please contact the ITS Help Desk if you would like help setting your SMU email to forward to a personal address.

Questions or concerns?

Moodle has many features that seem daunting to users. If you are having issues with your course content or submitting assignments, contact your instructor. Contact the ITS Help Desk if you are having account or login issues. Your instructor and the Office of the Registrar should be notified if a class is missing from your “My courses” list. When a course is added or dropped, it can take a few days to process and shown in your “My Courses” list. For general help using Moodle, contact the Help Desk Coordinator, Annie Wigley, or the Technology Coordinator, Erik Gregory.

Finding Saint Martin's Moodle homepage

There are a number of ways for users to access Saint Martin's Moodle. Many users bookmark the SMU Moodle homepage on their personal computers for future convenience. Here are three of the easiest methods to reach Moodle:

1. From the SMU website home page, go to the Quick Links drop-down menu at the top right hand corner of the webpage and select "Moodle" from the list of choices.
2. From any web browser, type: <http://moodle.stmartin.edu>
3. Click any [Moodle link](#) or  icon on the Saint Martin's website.

Logging into Moodle

Once you have reached Saint Martin's Moodle homepage, your screen will look very similar to Figure 1, seen below. To log in, enter your username and password at the right hand side of the screen. Moodle is integrated with your SMU network account, meaning your SMU username (firstname.lastname) and password will grant you access to Moodle. Please *do not* include "@stmartin.edu" at the end of your username when logging into Moodle. If you do not have a network account, please visit www.stmartin.edu/its to request yours as soon as possible.

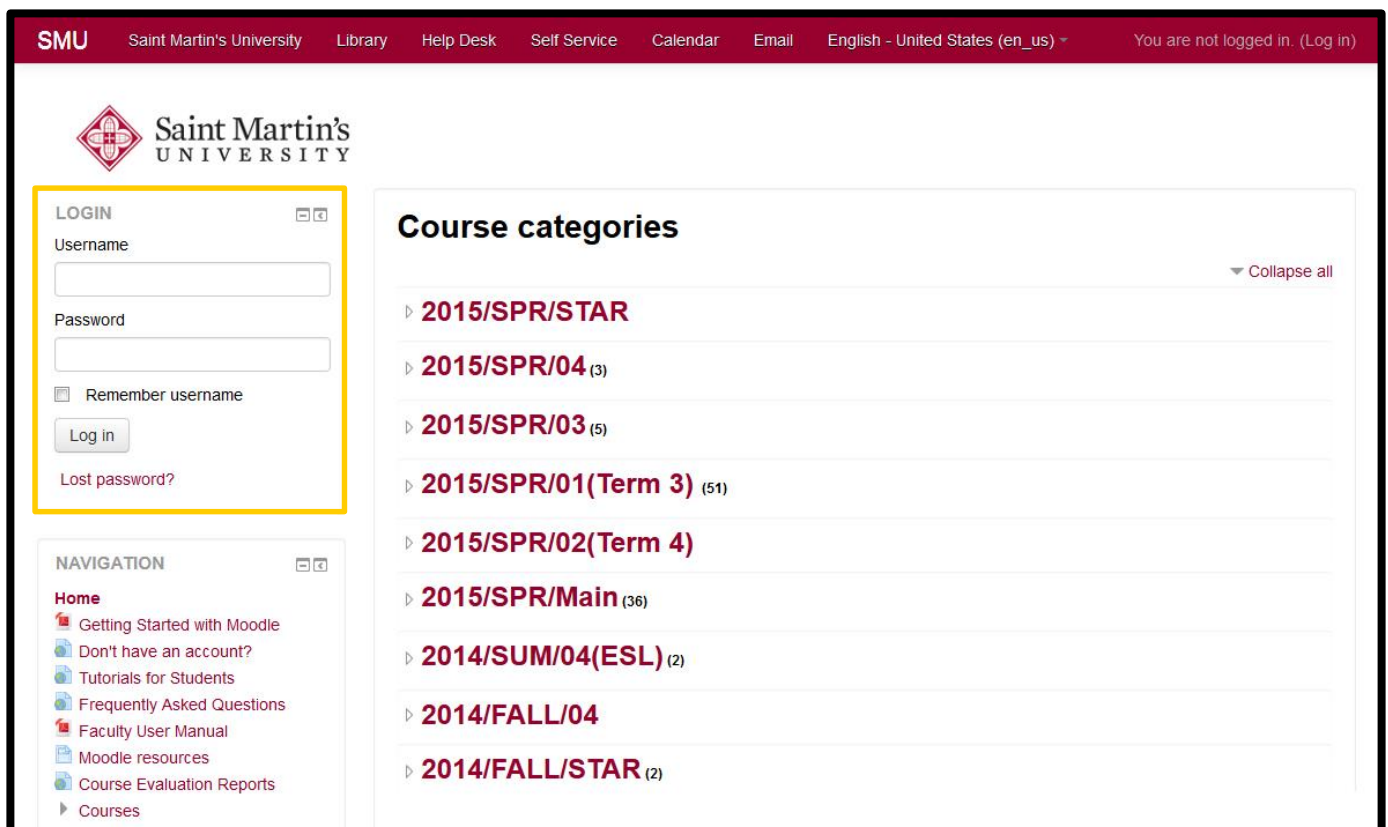


Figure 1: SMU Moodle home page before logging in. Use your SMU network account username and password to log in on the left hand side of the page, as shown. Do NOT include "@stmartin.edu" at the end of your username.

Once a valid username and password have been used to login, Moodle will appear very similar to Figure 2, seen on the next page. In the center, you will find the list of your SMU Moodle courses. Note that a user must be listed as a participant of each specific course for it to show up in this list or be viewable. Courses must also be set by instructors to be “visible” to students. Usually courses start to show up a few weeks before the start of their term, but some instructors do not use Moodle at all. If you are unsure whether or not your course should be visible, please contact your instructor or the ITS Help Desk.

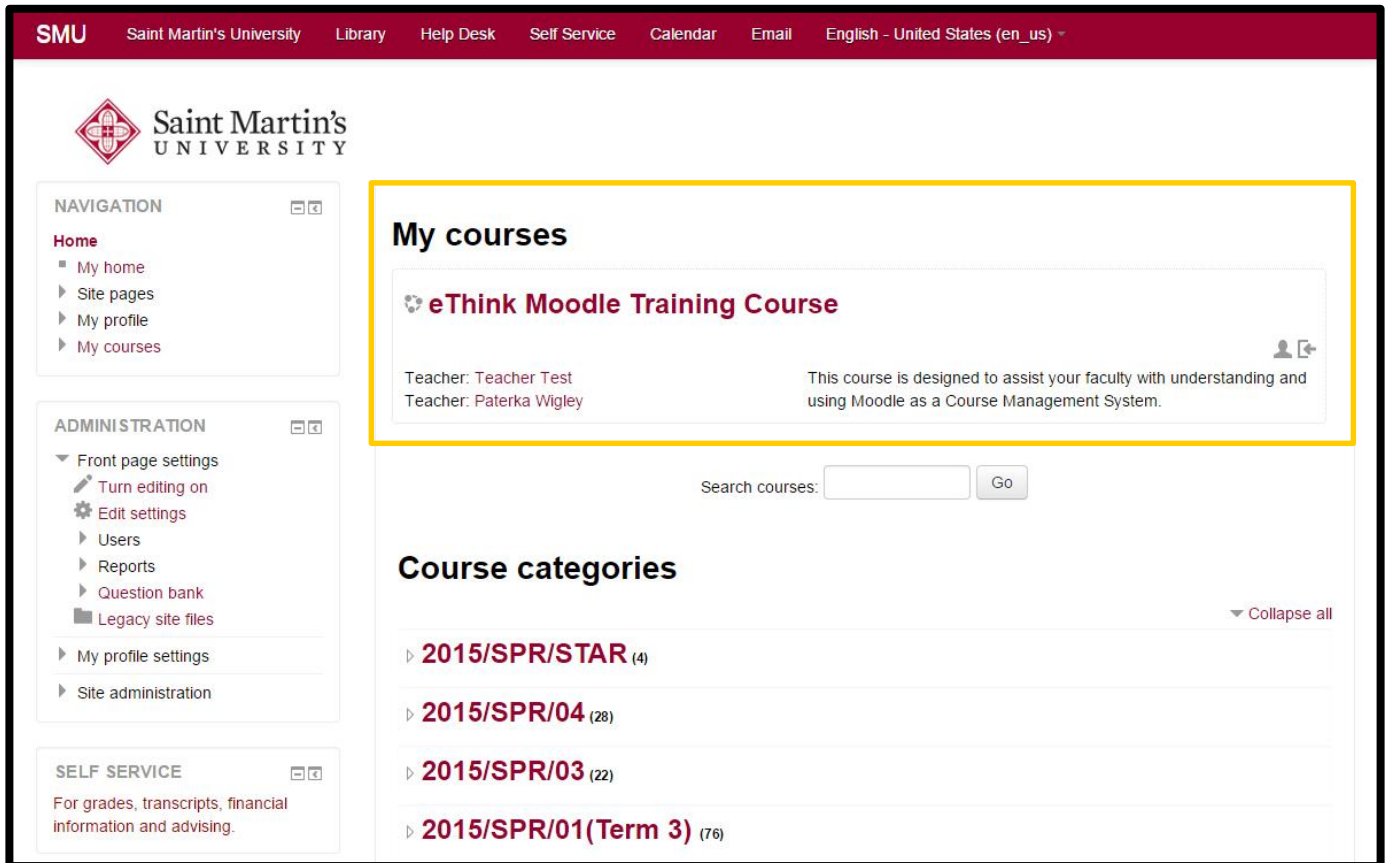


Figure 2: Moodle’s home page after logging in will display My courses, the area that lists all enrolled and active courses for the logged in user. The example user only has one course, the eThink Moodle Training Course, but users with multiple active courses will find all active courses that they are a part of in the My Courses section.

Navigation Basics

Once you enter your course, you will see the front page, also called the Moodle class home page, divided in a three column layout; the center, where most of your course activities/content will be located in a topic-based or week-based format , and two columns of menu items (referred to as “blocks”) on either side.

Many blocks can be added, removed, and relocated by your instructor, meaning, that each of your courses may appear slightly different. You should become familiar with the features that appear as part of the average course. See Figure 3 below, which breaks down the key features for each section of the side menus.

SMU Saint Martin's University Library Help Desk Self Service Calendar Email

eThink Moodle Training Course

Home ► SMU Faculty Resources ► ETH101.A1-2009.SPMain

NAVIGATION

Home

- Dashboard
- Site pages
- ▼ Current course
 - ▼ ETH101.A1-2009.SPMain
 - Participants
 - Badges
 - General
 - August 25 - August 31
 - September 1 - September 7
 - September 8 - September 14
 - September 15 - September 21
 - September 22 - September 28
 - September 29 - October 5
 - October 6 - October 12
 - October 13 - October 19
 - October 20 - October 26
 - October 27 - November 2
 - November 3 - November 9
 - November 10 - November 16
 - November 17 - November 23
 - November 24 - November 30
 - December 1 - December 7
 - December 8 - December 14
- My courses

ADMINISTRATION

- ▼ Course administration
 - Grades

ACTIVITIES

- Assignments
- Attendances
- Chats
- Choices
- Feedback
- Forums
- Glossaries
- Quizzes
- Resources

QUICKMAIL

- Compose New Email
- Signatures
- View Drafts
- View History

CALENDAR

December 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Welcome to the eThink Education Moodle training course. The goal of this course is to introduce you to some of the key features you will likely need to setup your course in Moodle. Once you complete this course, you will be ready to begin using Moodle as a tool to enhance learning for your students.

- The Pedagogy of Moodle
- Introductory Survey
- Use Policy
- FAQs
- eReserves
- Daily Attendance

August 25 - August 31

Moodle allows you to present course content in a number of different formats. We are using the Weekly format for this course. Moodle allows you to add reference materials such as PowerPoint presentations for students. Below is a sample of a PowerPoint file linked to Moodle.

- Introduction to eLearning
- Math Solutions

September 1 - September 7

Moodle allows you to create Choices, which act like mini-surveys or pre-tests. You can use these to gauge student's initial understanding of key concepts. You might present a choice at the beginning of lesson and then again at the end and compare the results to measure student progress.

- Choice Exercise about Moodle

September 8 - September 14

Moodle allows for several types on direct interaction between teachers and students and also among students. Two popular options are chats and forums. The difference between a 'chat' and a 'forum' is that chats occur at specific dates and times with all users converging and actively discussing whereas forums are ongoing and users can participate whenever is convenient for them.

- Moodle Chat
- Moodle Forum

September 15 - September 21

Your course content probably includes articles and references available via the web or as documents on your computer. Moodle allows you to link those in, so students can easily view them. The link below to the New York Times is a good example. Practice this by adding a link of your own.

- New York Times
- Pedagogy Blog

September 22 - September 28

Moodle allows teachers to require students to submit their work online. A student can prepare a paper or a presentation and then upload it to Moodle, where the teacher can then access it and review it. Here we will practice uploading a Word document assignment submission.

- Upload a Word Document
- How To Video on Uploading a Word Document

Figure 3: Above is the typical layout for block menus, though some classes may differ slightly. From top to bottom, left to right: (1) Navigation, (2) Administration, (3) Activities, (4) Quickmail, and (5) Calendar.

1. Navigation

The Navigation block is an expanding menu including My Home, Site Pages, My Profile, and Courses. “My Home” takes users to their personal dashboard, showing course overviews for Moodle pages tied to that account. “Site Pages” expands to show resources and help guides for the entire SMU Moodle site, including this help guide. “My Profile” will take the logged in user to their public profile, a minimalistic page showing a user’s enrolled courses, including past courses which will appear in gray, and a few basic user details. Profiles can only be seen by logged in SMU users. “Current Course” will also appear as an item in this block when viewing a course. This allows the user to quickly move between weeks or topics on the Moodle course page. Finally, “My Courses” is an expandable menu listing all courses a user is or has participated in, making moving between courses fast and easy.

2. Administration

The Administration block adapts depending on what the user is viewing. When viewing a course, enrolled participants can view any visible grades by clicking Grades, located underneath a submenu heading “Course Administration.” The Administration block will house a submenu called “My profile settings” when viewing profiles. Within this submenu is “Edit profile,” where users can update user photo, location, time zone, and other settings. It is recommended that users keep their profiles up to date, including a current and identifiable photo.

3. Activities

When an instructor adds an activity or resource to a course (see Commonly Used Activities and Resources Icon Legend below), the Activities block will update when viewing that course to include a current list of all visible activities and resources. This can be great help users navigate to assignments much more quickly, especially in a more extensive online-based course. This block only appears when viewing a course, and includes activities and resources from that course exclusively.

4. Quickmail

Though not universally used, many instructors communicate with students through the Quickmail feature. Inside the Quickmail block are four links: “Compose New Email” allows users to create a new email communicating with any SMU Moodle user; the “Signatures” feature is where users can create custom signatures, much like those found in an email client; “View Drafts” shows all messages in the drafting stage; “View History” shows users their past communications with other users.

5. Calendar

The Calendar block in a Moodle course will display any and all upcoming events listed for that user, including global events, course events, group events, and user events. It is a great way to stay on top of college life!

6. Messages

The Messages block displays a quick preview of any unread messages that your Moodle account has received, and also has a link to take one to their Moodle messages inbox even if there is no new content to view.

7. Course Evaluation (not shown)

Course Evaluation is a tool that allows students to evaluate classes and instructors by completing a short survey. The block is hidden until the end of a term or session, but will appear on the left in the menu area towards the bottom. Evaluations are available to students one week before the end of the class. Evaluations are anonymous, and not made available to the instructor until grades have been submitted.

Commonly Used Activities and Resources Icon Legend

Below are some of the more commonly used Activities and Resources and a description of their basic functions. Students cannot create or add these features, but instead interact with what the instructor already has set up. If you are assigned a task and do not see it on the Moodle course page for that class, contact your instructor as soon as possible.



Assignment: Used to collect assignments like essays or reports. Work can be uploaded or entered as text.



Attendance: Used to record daily attendance and may show a student their attendance grade in a course.



Chat: Used to have real-time, synchronous discussions between students or instructors.



Choice: Used to collect multiple choice responses to a question prompted by the instructor.



Course Evaluation: Appears at the top right of a course nearing completion to collect student feedback.



Feedback: Used by an instructor to collect student feedback or conduct surveys.



File: A PDF, image, video, recording, or document uploaded by an instructor for student use or reference.



Folder: Used by an instructor to organize related Files for students to reference or use.



Forum: Used to facilitate asynchronous discussions, peer reviewing, or other response-based activities.



Lesson: Used to present a lesson with a series of basic, interactive HTML pages for students to learn alongside.



Quiz: Used to administer quizzes to students. Most quizzes are set up to allow only one attempt per student.



Survey: Used by instructors to gather data from students for personal reflection and betterment of teaching.



URL: A direct link to another website or web page added by the instructor as a student resource.