



Vista I: Getting Your Feet Wet (Basic)

Description: Come explore the power and flexibility of Vista! Vista is a complete course management system, which permits a full range of online learning activities and allows them to be organized and managed for optimal effectiveness. Vista's customizable interface allows instructors to build courses to support their teaching style and methods. UF has purchased a campus-wide license for Vista; therefore any faculty, staff, or graduate student teaching classes at UF can apply for a Vista course account.

In this session, you will be given a brief overview of Vista's learning hierarchy and user roles, understand what you need to use Vista, and see where to apply for a course account. Then, you will learn hands-on how to:

- Access your course in Vista
- Add a header to your course
- Add tools to the Course Toolbar
- Post your syllabus, readings, and lecture files (including PowerPoint files)
- Create links to web sites, documents, videos, etc.
- Create discussion topics to stimulate student collaboration online
- Create assignments to allow students to post essays and web sites
- Use the Vista Calendar to schedule tasks and events
- Use the Vista Gradebook to work with the student roster and add grades
- Use Vista Mail to neatly organize course-related email
- Post announcements to the whole class
- Save your work by doing regular section backups

Audience: Faculty, staff, teaching assistants

Duration: 2 hours

Prerequisites: None

VISTA AT UF: AN INTRODUCTION FOR FACULTY

What is Vista?

Developed by WebCT, Vista is a course management system: a collection of synchronized online tools to support teaching and learning. Instructors can use Vista to supplement face-to-face courses with online materials and tools. Likewise, courses can be developed and delivered entirely over the Internet.

FOR FACULTY

Administration. Vista provides a variety of tools to increase efficiency of course administration:

- Posting documents and files, e.g. syllabus, readings, lecture notes (including PowerPoint), library electronic reserves, etc.
- Scheduling and time management, e.g., calendar, announcements
- Machine scoring of objective, online tests
- Online submission of files and documents
- Online, customizable gradebook
- Securely posting grades
- Student activity tracking

Pedagogy. Vista's customizable interface allows instructors to build courses to support their teaching style and methods. Instructors are not required to adapt instruction to the tool but can adapt the tools to meet their needs. Vista tools support:

- Reflective response to readings, content questions
- Submission of written assignments with both formative and summative instructor feedback
- Interaction (learner-content, learner-learner, learner-instructor)
- Individual and group assignments
- Constant feedback
- Controlled release of course components

FOR STUDENTS

Vista supports student learning by providing to students tools to facilitate:

- Student-to-student communication
- Group work and collaboration
- Online note-taking
- Practice quizzes with immediate feedback
- Reflective writing
- Progress tracking
- Constant access to grade information at the instructor's discretion

What do I need to use Vista?

Gatorlink ID

Everyone uses their Gatorlink username and password to access Vista. If you or your students do not have a Gatorlink ID or cannot remember your Gatorlink login information, visit the Gatorlink website (<http://gatorlink.ufl.edu>) or the UF HelpDesk (CSE520, 352-392-4357, helpdesk@ufl.edu) for assistance.

Course Account in Vista

Complete a request form by clicking the **Faculty: Request an Account** link at <http://lss.at.ufl.edu>. Learning Support Systems (LSS) will create your account within three business days of receiving the form. **Important:** Please enter your section number(s) in this form. Also, tell us if you want one Vista section for ALL Registrar sections you've been assigned, or a corresponding Vista section for each Registrar section. LSS must create your Vista section(s) in order to load your student rosters. Student rosters are loaded a few days prior to the beginning of the term and updated throughout the drop-add period. You will receive an email with instructions on how to access your course.

Computer with Internet Access

Because Vista is an Internet-based application where the software is installed on a remote server, the user does not need to download and install Vista on his/her computer. However, all files you want students to access in your WebCT courses must exist on the WebCT remote server. Therefore, you must move these files from your computer to the WebCT server while you are connected to the Internet.

Are there other requirements to use Vista?

Yes. Each computer from which you and your students access Vista must:

- Have the Java plugin from Sun Microsystems (1.4.2 or higher)
 - See the **Check Java** and **Download Java** links at <http://lss.at.ufl.edu>
 - Java from Microsoft will not work properly with Vista.
- Have a browser configured to certain specifications
 - Run the **WebCT Browser Tuneup** from <http://lss.at.ufl.edu>
 - The AOL browser does not work well with Vista
- Allow popup windows
 - In Internet Explorer, for example, click **Tools > Pop-up Blocker > Turn Off Pop-up Blocker**
 - Run the **WebCT Browser Tuneup** for common pop-up blockers and how to find and disable them

Instructing your students to do the above before accessing Vista will prevent most access problems and frustrations when using Vista. You can also refer them to the **Students: A Vista Introduction** link at <http://lss.at.ufl.edu>.

How do I get help designing and teaching in Vista?

To help you learn Vista, we have three major sources of assistance:

- Vista training classes (see <http://lss.at.ufl.edu/services/training/>).
- Online documentation and animated tutorials are available from your course account. Go to **File Manager** and click on the **Training Resources** folder.
- Contact us. LSS staff are currently available 8-5, M-F; can be reached at 352-392-2007 or learning-support@ufl.edu; and are located in the CSE Building, Room 520.

How do my students get help using Vista?

- During the first week of the term, we suggest you show your students how to access your Vista course, find the materials you post in your course, and how to use the tools you add to your course.
- Other resources: **Student Demos** (animated tutorials) link at <http://lss.at.ufl.edu>.
- For students needing assistance with computer and technical requirements for using Vista, refer them to the UF HelpDesk (CSE Building, Room 520, 352-392-4357, helpdesk@ufl.edu). The HelpDesk can also assist students who are having trouble logging into Vista.

What do I do if I get a message that the server is unavailable?

Go to <http://lss.at.ufl.edu> and check for notices of service outages. If there are no outage notices, and if it is M-F, 8-5 contact the UF HelpDesk to report the problem. If it is after hours or on the weekend, contact Computing and Networking Services: 392-2291 or <http://www.cns.ufl.edu/index.html> (click "Report A Problem").

What Do I Tell My Students?

It's 10 PM. on Sunday. Your class of 850 students has a big assignment due at midnight. Your inbox has 35 emails from students who "can't attach my assignment in Vista!"


Save yourself (and your students) some frustration by nipping problems in the bud. Take 10 minutes at the beginning of your course to create "Vista-savvy" students.

Cut and paste the black font sections (directed at students) of this document into a customized document for your course. Post it along with your syllabus on the homepage and make it required reading, or make it a handout for your students on the first day of class. Better yet, go over it with your students. You could even give a short Vista quiz afterwards!

How do I access Vista?


- Use Internet Explorer, Netscape or Mozilla browser (Safari also works for Mac users). Do not use AOL.
- Point your browser to <http://lss.at.ufl.edu>. Bookmark this page. This is where you will always access Vista. Do not bookmark any other page.
- Under the "WebCT Resources" heading note the **Student Demos** and the **Students: A Vista Introduction** links, where you can find tutorials and information on using Vista. Also note any announcements regarding Vista on the right side of our web site.
- Under the "WebCT Resources" heading, click on the **WebCT Browser Tuneup** link. Follow the step-by-step instructions to configure your browser to allow Vista to run properly.
- Click on the **Check Java** link to see if your computer has the correct version of Java. You will need Java 1.4.2 or higher from Sun Microsystems. Java from Microsoft will not work with Vista. If you need to download the correct version, click on the **Download Java** link.
- Click on the **VISTA** link, choose the **University of Florida**, and login using your Gatorlink username and password. You will see a listing of all your Vista courses. Click on the link for the course you wish to enter.

If you are not able to login after following these instructions, contact the UF Computing HelpDesk at 352.392.HELP (4357), Mon – Thur (7:30 AM – 10:00 PM), Fri – 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM and Sun – 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM. You can also email the HelpDesk at helpdesk@ufl.edu, or come by the HelpDesk at the Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) building, Room 520, between the hours of 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM, Monday – Friday.

Navigating – Do not use your browser's back and forward buttons. Navigate by clicking links or breadcrumbs. You can open a tree view of the site by clicking the  icon at the top left. Navigate using the tree view by clicking where you want to go.

Using the "Student View" tab, give your students a quick tour of your course, showing which tools you'll be using and how you've organized your course. Let students know what software they will need to have on their computers to view your files (e.g., Word, PowerPoint, Windows Media Player, etc.). Information for obtaining common software is in the **Students: A Vista Introduction** link on the <http://lss.at.ufl.edu> page.

Following are a few **Tools Tips** you will want to give your students. Cut and paste the tips for those tools you plan to use in your course into your handout.

Email – A green check will appear on the **Mail** icon when you have a new email. The email tool is internal to this course in Vista. You can't email your friend or grandmother (unless they happen to be in this class). You can't attach files larger than 250KB to a Vista email. You can forward your Vista email to another account by clicking the  icon. But you can't reply from your other account; just read it and then go to Vista Mail to reply.

My Grades – A green check will appear on the **My Grades** icon when there are new grades posted. You will be able to see your grades as soon as they are released.

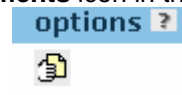
Assessments – Save each answer individually as soon as you choose your answer. If the quiz requires a long answer (essay), click **Save Answer** every couple of minutes so you don't lose what you've typed so far. If your computer crashes or you lose Internet connection while taking a quiz, don't worry. Just log back in to the course and click the **Continue Assessment** button for that quiz. Do not use the **Save All** option at the end of the assessment.


Discussions – Be aware that when you are participating in a discussion in Vista, everyone in the course can see all posts and who made the post. Be responsible for your words.

Assignments – You will submit attachments to me by uploading your document from your computer. Instructions on how to do this are under the **Student Demos** link on the <http://lss.at.ufl.edu> page.

Include the following paragraph about assignments, only if you intend to allow your students to take back their assignments before the due date. This option is available under **More Options** when you are creating the assignment. If you want this option, you must add the **Assignments** tool to the Course Toolbar.

You may take back your assignment once you've submitted it, as long as it's before the due date. In order to take back your assignment, you must click on the **Assignments** icon in the toolbar (it

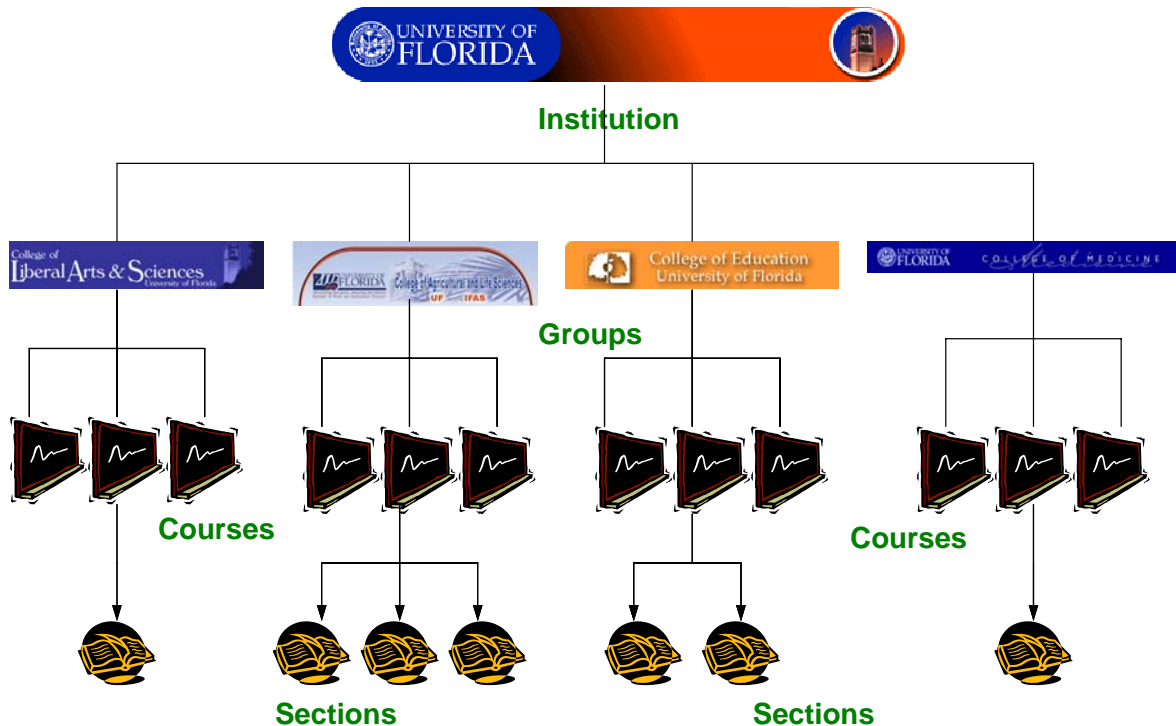


may be under "More Tools") and then to the **Submitted** tab. Use the  icon to the right of the assignment you want to take back.

Now, you should have Vista-savvy students. You can safely tell your students that if they have problems in Vista to call 392-HELP, not you! If the problem truly is instructor related, such as a student needs to take an exam he or she missed, he or she will be directed to contact you. The HelpDesk will not override your authority as instructor.

Contact e-Learning Support Services at 392.2007 if you have any questions.

Vista Learning Context Hierarchy



- **Institution** level is where administrative functions of Vista occur – including system-wide settings, creation of group and course accounts, and adding users to Vista
- **Group** level allows for College-level “branding” and template development to give similar look and feel to all courses in a college
- **Course** level also contains templates for developing your course, and it is where you enroll instructors, designers, students, etc. into sections
- **Section** level is primary *instructional* context – as well as primary *development* context for most faculty. It’s the “live” context of a course where students are enrolled. Learning Support Services creates the actual sections in order to load the students into them. Content developed at course level – as a template - is pushed down to the section. Course development is continued at the section level throughout the term (or started from scratch at the section). At the end of the term, section content can be copied back up to the course level as a template to use for future terms.

Section Roles in Vista

- **Designers**
Have the ability to add, remove, and rearrange content; but they do not have access to tools related to users such as the gradebook and cannot interact with students.
- **Instructors**
Work with student information tools such as the Grade Book, but cannot add, edit, delete or rearrange content. Instructors can interact with students.
- **Teaching Assistant**
This role is defined by the Instructor under Settings at the course level. It can be almost identical to the Instructor role, or more limited at the instructor's discretion.
- **Students**
View content and use tools that have been made available by the Instructors and Designers.
- **Auditors**
Function like students, but it's up to the Instructor to retain or remove grade information from quiz attempts and other graded functions in the Grade Book.

VISTA I: STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

The step-by-step instructions for the following tasks apply to section-level designers and instructors. If you are the instructor of record, you were enrolled by Learning Support Systems into both the Section Designer and Section Instructor roles.

1. To Access Vista

All users access Vista the same way:

- Go to **http://lss.at.ufl.edu**
- Click on one of the **Vista** links
- Choose the link for **University of Florida**
- Login using your GatorLink username and password
- Most users will work at the section level:
 - On the “My WebCT” page in the “Course List” box, click on the section link. For example:
VIS1111 – Getting Your Feet Wet – Spring 2005 – Sect. 0001
If this is the first time you clicked on the section, a template may get assigned to your section. Wait for this process to complete.
 - Read and understand the differences between the “Build,” “Teach,” and “Student View” tabs. (Once you’ve read this page, you can prevent it from reappearing every time you login by checking the box in the lower left that says **Do not show this page again.**)
 - Click the **Start** button. The section is displayed.

2. Add Instructors, Designers, TAs

If you need a TA, co-instructor, or co-designer added to your section, do the following:

- On the “My WebCT” page in the “Course List” box, click on the **course link** for your course. For example:
AST1234 – Astronomy 101
- From the **Learning Context Manager** tab, click the **section link** for the section into which you wish to enroll users.
- Check the box next to the role(s) in which you wish to enroll a user.
- Click the **Enroll into Selected Roles** button.
- In the Value field, type in the GatorLink user name and click **Run Query**.
 - If you get the error message “**User name not found:**” confirm the GatorLink username and contact Learning Support Systems to have that ID added to the Vista database.
- Check the box by the GatorLink user name and click the **Enroll** button.

3. Edit the Header for Your Course

- From the **Build** tab, go to the Organizer Page where you wish to edit the header
- Click on the **pencil icon** to the right of the page header
- Click **On** to turn on the HTML Creator
 - If this is the first time the HTML Creator has loaded on your computer, be patient while it loads.
- Create your header by typing text, modifying format and layout, and optionally, inserting images just like you can do with any word processor.

4. Add Tools to the Course Toolbar

Regardless of the page to which students navigate, the Toolbar is always visible. Add tools that will be frequently used by your students, such as “My Grades,” “Mail,” “Announcements,” “Calendar,” etc. When students access content through the Toolbar – “Discussions,” “Assessments,” “Assignments,” etc. – they see a list of all the discussion topics (or assessments or assignments) you have created. On the other hand, if you add a discussion topic (or assessment or assignment) to a page, only that *particular* topic (or assessment or assignment) is accessible.

- From the **Build** tab, to the right of **Add to Course Toolbar**:
 - If the tool is visible, click on its icon to add it to the Toolbar.
 - If the tool is not visible, click on **More Tools** and select the tool.
- Once a tool is on the Toolbar, click on it to:
 - Remove it from the Toolbar
 - Move it left or right
 - Go to the tool to edit its content

Tip: Only the tools in the first 4 positions on the Toolbar are visible to students. All tools after the fourth one are listed under **More Tools** on the Toolbar. To check this out, click the **Student View** tab.

5. Organizer Pages

In order to keep your Home Page uncluttered, you can create Organizer Pages where course content can be accessed by students. Examples:

- **By week.** Create separate organizer pages for each week of your course (Week 1, Week 2, etc.), and add the week’s activities (readings, quizzes, assignments, discussions, etc.). You can create the entire course in advance, hiding future organizer pages until you are ready for your students to see them.
- **By activities.** You can create an organizer page for each activity in your course (Readings, Assignments, Discussions, Quizzes, etc.).
- **By subject matter.** You can create separate organizer pages for different topical areas of your course. For example, if you teach an Astronomy course, you can create a unique page for Planets, another page for Stars, another for Galaxies, etc.

5.1 Create an organizer page

- From the **Build** tab, go to the Organizer Page to which you wish to add a page.
 - Pages can be nested within other pages
- Click **Organizer Page** on the left:
 - Enter a title
 - Click **Create**

A link to the page is displayed.

You can always tell which page you are on by looking at the path (called breadcrumbs) above the header. Navigate to previous pages by clicking on the link in the breadcrumbs:



Or use the **Go to** drop-down menu to jump to various pages in your course.

5.2 Add content to an organizer page

- From the **Build** tab, click on the page’s link (or icon) and select **Go to Organizer**
- Optionally, modify the header for that page.
- Add course materials using the options under “Add to Organizer Page” on the left.

5.3 Make an organizer page available or unavailable to students:

- From the **Build** tab, click on the page and select **Edit Settings**
- Optionally, change the title and description
- Choose **Yes** or **No** beside “Available.”
- Optionally, select **Set Release Criteria** to release the page on a certain date, or to specific students or groups. Even if you have selected “Yes” for “Available,” the page will not be visible to students until all release criteria have been met. Likewise, if release criteria are met, but availability is set to “No,” the page will not be visible to students.

6. Post Your Syllabus, Readings, and Lecture Files

The easiest way to post a file, whatever its format (HTML, PDF, PowerPoint, Word, Excel, etc.), is to use the following method, which also creates a link to the file within your course:

- From the **Build** tab, go to the Organizer Page to which you wish to add a document.
- Click on **Content File** to the left
- Click on **Select File**
 - Choose **Upload File** from the bottom right
 - Beside the File line, click on **Browse**
 - This opens a window to your hard drive; find and click on the file you wish to upload and click **Open**
 - Click **Save**
- Click on **Add Selected** to complete the process.

Tips:

- If you wish to modify a non-HTML document that has been added to your Vista course, you must make the changes on your computer and upload the file again. You cannot make the changes to the file within Vista. For this reason, you might consider creating documents within Vista if you expect to make changes to them. Both the “Syllabus” and “Content File” tools offer the option to create rather than select the file. Creating a document in Vista formats it in HTML, the native word processing language of the Internet.
- Using the “My Computer” option when uploading files allows you to select up to 10 files on your hard drive and upload them all at once. However, there may be a size limit per file. With the “Upload File” button, there is no known file size limit.
- You can transfer an unlimited number of files from your computer to Vista at once using WebDAV (Web-based Distributed Authoring and Versioning). WebDAV is an Internet protocol that allows a connection to be established between the Vista server and your local computer. Once this connection is set up, you can drag and drop files from your computer directly into your Vista course.

7. Create Web Links (URL)

You can link to any Internet address, including direct links to documents and streaming audio or video sites.

- From the **Build** tab, go to the Organizer Page to which you wish to add a web link
- Click on **URL** to the left
- Click on **Create URL**
- Give the link to be created a title or label (e.g. “University of Florida Home Page”)
- Type in the full URL, including the **http://** (e.g. <http://www.ufl.edu>), or select and copy [Ctrl-c] the URL from your browser and paste [Ctrl-v] it here

8. Discussions

The “Discussions” tool serves as a place where an instructor and students can post questions and comments for others to read. Course participants can respond to others’ comments creating “threaded” discussions. The Discussions Tool can be added to the Course Toolbar, or individual Discussion Topics can be added to an Organizer Page.

8.1 Add a Discussion Topic to an Organizer Page

- From the **Build** tab, go to the Organizer Page where you want to add a discussion topic
- Click on **Discussions** to the left
- Click **Create Discussion Topic**
- Fill in the appropriate fields
 - If you wish to grade student comments, click on the box beside “Topic is gradable.” This will automatically create a corresponding column in the Grade Book and will transfer discussion grades as you input them.
 - For graded discussions, you will need to title the Grade Book column and choose a grading type. To use Vista’s Grade Book calculation capabilities, the grade type must be numeric.
 - Note the options for Editable posts, Locked, and Anonymous.
- Click **Save** to add the topic to your organizer page.

8.2 Post, Read, and Grade Discussions

8.2a Post a Message

- From the **Teach** tab, find and click on the discussion topic where you wish to post a message.
- Click **Create Message**
- Type in a Subject line
- Type in your Message
 - You can simply type your message, or use the “HTML Creator” option if you wish to add pictures, use fonts and colors for emphasis, or create active hyperlinks to external websites.
 - Do not check **Use HTML** unless you know how to use HTML code or need to show HTML tags.
 - Use **Insert equation** if you want to use the built-in Equation Editor to compose an equation for a Math, Stats, Physics, etc. class.
- Click **Add Attachments** to upload a file to go along with your message. As long as the “Upload File” button is used, there is no known file size limit for adding attachments.
- Before posting your message, it is a good idea to **Preview** it before you post it to the whole class to read.
 - You can also **Save as Draft** if you wish to review and post later.
- Click **Post**.

8.2b Read Discussion Postings

- From the **Teach** tab, click on the appropriate topic.
- Under Subject, click on the link for the message you wish to read.
 - In the pop-up window you can read the posting, **Reply** to that posting (so it is seen by the class), and even **Forward** that posting as a private email to selected recipients in your course.
 - You can also click **Display Complete Thread** to view all the postings in this “thread” (list of connected postings).

8.2c Grade Discussion Postings

- From the **Teach** tab, click on the appropriate topic.
- Click on **Grade Discussions** at the top.
 - This link is available only if the topic is marked as gradable. If you want to make a topic you've already created gradable, click on **Edit Settings**.
- The left side of the page allows you to input a grade value. The right side allows you to view posts by students, see a Performance Report for each student, and email students directly from the Discussion tool.
- Click **Save Grades** in the left side to save the data and transfer grades to the Grade Book.

Tip: If you wish to assign a discussion topic to specific students or groups, click the **Set Release Criteria** link. All release criteria must be satisfied in order for the topic to show up for the assigned students or group.

9. Assignments

The "Assignments" tool allows students to submit written responses to assignments either by entering their response online or uploading a paper as an attachment. This tool can also be used to allow students to submit web pages. While papers students upload into Vista are seen by the instructor but not other students, the instructor may choose to *publish* submissions for the rest of the class to view.

9.1 Create an Assignment

- From the **Build** tab, go to the Organizer Page where you want to add the assignment.
- Click on **Assignments** to the left
- Click **Create Assignment**.
- Fill in the appropriate *Title* and *Instructions* fields
- Decide whether students will input text and/or attach documents, or attach a web site as a zip file containing the pages and images that comprise their web site
 - As long as the "Upload File" button is used, there is no known file size limit for adding attachments.
- Send the assignment to the appropriate recipients or save the assignment as a draft.
- Set due date (decide whether to link this due date to calendar) and cutoff date.
- Decide whether or not to activate grading features
- Click on **More Options**
 - Decide whether students can take back submissions before the due date. If you choose this option, you must add the "Assignments" tool to the Course Toolbar. That is where students must go to take back their submissions.
 - Decide whether or not students can publish (make public) their own submission.

9.2 View, Comment, and Grade Assignment Submissions

- From the **Teach** tab, go to the appropriate Assignment.
- Click on the title of the submission you wish to read.
- In the right side of the screen:
 - If the student attached a paper, click on the attached filename link to read it.
 - **Tip:** To edit the paper, you must download it to your computer, make the changes, and then re-attach the changed version for the student to view. Use the **Add Attachments** button.
 - You must enter comments
 - For **Save Options**, decide whether to:
 - Return the submission to student for further editing. If you choose this option, you will not be able to see the submission again until it has been returned by the student.

- Save the assignment for further review.
- Assign a grade to close out this assignment if it is a graded assignment. The grade will get transferred to the Grade Book.
or
Mark as completed and return to student if it is not a graded assignment.
- Click **Save**.

10. Grade Book and Student Roster

The Grade Book and Student Roster are essentially the same thing in Vista. As a result, you can see all section members and their roles in the Grade Book, along with grade values.

10.1 Populate your Course at the Beginning of a Term

- Student rosters will be automatically loaded at the beginning of a term by e-Learning Support Services.
- You will need to notify e-Learning Support Services of your course and section numbers prior to the beginning of each term: learning-support@ufl.edu. This allows us to verify the course and instructor and to load the roster in a timely fashion.
- Course rosters are updated with new adds throughout the drop-add period.

10.2 Manually Add Students and Auditors to your Course

- From the **Teach** tab, click on **Grade Book** in the “Course Management Tools” listing
- Click on the **Add Members** button at the bottom
- Type in the GatorLink user name
- Select the appropriate role:
 - You can input grade values for both “Students” and “Auditors” for any columns you create or that are created due to gradeable Assignments, Quizzes, and Discussions.
- Click **Add**
 - If you get the error message “**User name not found:**”, confirm the GatorLink user name and contact e-Learning Support Services to have that user name added to the Vista database.
- Click **Save**
- Click **OK**

10.3 Add Columns to the Grade Book

You can create several types of columns in the Grade Book for many different uses.

- In the **Grade Book**, click the **Column Settings** button in the upper right
- Select the column type from the **Create Column** drop-down menu:
 - *Alphanumeric* columns can contain letters and numbers
 - Alphanumeric columns cannot be used when calculating grades in Vista
 - *Calculated* columns allow you to create a formula for calculating data from other columns
 - *Letter Grade* columns display a letter grade based on a grading scale you establish and a calculated column that computes a grade value
 - *Numeric* columns contain grades in number-only format
 - *Selection list* columns are used for check-off type assignments
 - *Text* columns allow you to input text strings
- Click on the green **Go** arrow
 - Give the new column a label
 - For Numeric and Calculated types, decide on a “Maximum value.”
 - In most case, you will want the column to be “Grade-related”.
 - Decide whether the column should be “released to students” right away.

- Click **Save**

10.4 Manually Add Data to Grade Book Columns

- In the Grade Book, click on the column name and select **Edit Values**
- Input grade values and comments (for changed grades, if desired)

Notes:

- Comments can be valuable when changing a student's grade. The comment takes effect *only* when the initial grade is changed; that is, a comment will not take effect the first time you enter the grade for a student.
 - Grade Book comments cannot be seen by students.
 - Instructors and TAs view grade comments by clicking **View Audit History**.
 - The Comment feature is only available for "Grade-related" columns.
- Click **Save**

How Students View Grades

Students view their grade information by clicking on **My Grades** in the Course Toolbar. They can also access grade information through tools such as Assessments and Assignments. **Tip:** The grade column must be released for the students to view the grade. To make sure the column is released, click the **Column Settings** button in the Grade Book. For the **Released to Student** row, make sure it is **Yes** for that column. To view grades from a student's perspective, enter a grade for the Demo Student for a gradable/released column, then go to Student View and click My Grades to see the grade.


11. Announcements

The most efficient way to convey messages to everyone in the class is through the "Announcements" tool. The Announcements tool has a pop-up delivery option so that your important message is displayed as a pop-up window every time your students sign into your section. You can schedule pop-up announcements to begin and end at specified times.

11.1 Create Announcements

- From the **Teach** tab, click on the **Announcements** tool in the toolbar
- Click **Create Announcement**
- Fill in Title and Message
- Select which roles should receive the announcement
- Choose a date range for your announcement using the Calendar icons or the drop-down menus
- Decide whether or not to deliver the announcement in a pop-up window
 - If you do not choose the pop-up option, students must click on the Announcements tool to view the announcement.
- Click **Send**
- Your announcement is shown with the date and time it will be posted, along with the status:
 - **Status = Ready:** the Announcement has been composed but has not been sent since the start date is in the future
 - **Status = Sent:** the Announcement is now going out to students
 - **Status = Expired:** the Announcement has passed its cut-off date and is no longer being sent. It will remain listed in the Announcements tool until deleted.

11.2 Delete Announcements

- In the **Announcements** tool, click the delete icon  to the far right of the Announcement you want to delete.

12. Mail

The **Mail Tool** is internal to the Vista system. All mail is sent, received, and stored within your Vista section. It allows you to communicate with other users enrolled in the same section, but not with the Internet public at large. This keeps your other email accounts uncluttered with course-related correspondence. Also, students won't have to worry about the reliability of their personal email service provider, nor can they "lose" critical course-related correspondence. Finally, Vista Mail blocks all spam and virus attachments unless such messages are deliberately sent by a user logged into your course; in which case the user can always be appropriately identified.


12.1 Compose and Send Mail to Individuals and Groups

- From the **Teach** tab, click on the **Mail** tool in the toolbar
- Click **Create Message**
- Click **Browse for Recipients** to select members:
 - Select any combination of **To**, **CC**, and **BCC** boxes by the names of course members
 - **Tip:** To select everyone in the section, check the box next to To, CC, or BCC. If you plan to select the majority of users, select everyone then uncheck the box next to those whom you don't want to receive the message.
 - Click **Save**
- Fill in the message components and click **Send**

Note: The Mail tool will not handle attachments larger than 250 KB. This tool is not intended as a way for students to submit assignments.

12.2 Read and Manage Mail

- From the **Teach** tab, click on the **Mail** tool in the toolbar
- New messages will be in the **Inbox** folder
 - Click on a message to read it
 - Note that you can **Reply**, **Reply to All**, **Forward**, **Print**, and **Delete** mail
- In the left frame you can create folders to help manage your Vista mail
- Click on **Refresh now** in the upper right corner to see if new messages have come in while you are in the Mail tool
- Note that when you delete Mail, the message goes into the **Deleted Mail** folder. If you delete messages from that folder, they are gone permanently.


Tip: You can forward your Vista email to another account by clicking the  icon. But you can't reply from your other account; just read it and then go to Vista Mail to reply.



13. Calendar

Use the Calendar Tool to schedule tasks and events related to your course.


13.1 Add and Edit Calendar Entries

- From the **Build** tab, click on the **Calendar** tool in the toolbar
- Click on the date to which you want to add an entry.
- Click on **Add Entry**
 - Give your entry a summary
 - Select the beginning and ending date
 - Click on the calendar icon to pick your dates from a calendar view, or
 - Use the drop-down menus to select the appropriate dates
 - Check the **This is an all-day event** box, if appropriate

- The **Type** drop-down menu allows you to choose which section to associate the entry to if you are enrolled in more than one Vista section, or to make the entry Personal (not associated with any course).
- Choose an Access level of either **Public** or **Private**. Private entries will not be seen by others.
- For Detail, type your calendar entry message.
 - Do not check **Use HTML** unless you know how to use HTML code or need to show HTML tags.
- Click on **More Options**
 - Link your entry to content inside your course by choosing **Internal Link**.
 - Select the tool from the drop down menu to which you wish to link and then click the green arrow 
 - Choose your target from the pop-up window displaying the available targets
 - Link to URLs anywhere on the Internet
 - URL links do not need to include the http:// prefix.
 - Choose a repeat interval and ending date if appropriate
- Click **Save**

Note: You can edit a calendar entry by clicking on the date number and then selecting the pencil icon . Likewise, you can delete a calendar entry by clicking on the delete icon .

13.2 Calendar Settings

In the upper right of the calendar tool there is an  [Edit Settings](#) link. This controls:


- Whether or not students can post public entries
- The instructor's default entry type (public or private)
- Personal preferred view (month, week, day) and beginning day of the week
- Whether or not accessing the calendar in this course also displays entries from other courses
- Whether personal entries are shown in the course calendar

Click **Save** to retain any calendar settings you select.

14. Save Your Work

For extra security of your course data, back up your Vista section content and save it on your computer. We STRONGLY recommend you do this at regular intervals (e.g., every Monday) and any time you have a critical event (e.g. just after each exam, every time you make major changes to your site, etc.).

- From the **Teach** tab, click **Tool View**.
- Click **Backup**.
- On the "Section Backup" page, click the **Backup** button.
 - **Do Not Interrupt the Backup Process!** How long the process takes depends on the size of your course and demand on the server when you perform the backup. You will have best results if you back up your course at off-peak times, especially early mornings (before 8 AM).
 - Once the backup is finished, the screen tells you that it succeeded and lists the location of your backup file.
 - Click **Continue**.
- Now download the backup (.bak) archive to your computer:
 - Click the **Build** tab, then **File Manager**.
 - In the **Breadcrumbs Line**, click on the name of your course. For example:

 University of... > University of... > Academic Tech... > Your Course > **Your Section** > Section
 - Select the check box beside the backup archive file and then click **Download**

- **Save** the file to your computer or network for long-term storage.
- Keep only the most recent backup of your section.