# Communicating with Students in Canvas

Canvas provides several different tools for communicating with your students. This document describes the two principal methods of communicating in Canvas and how/when to use each.

Communication Method I: Announcements

Announcements are similar to announcements in Chalk. Announcements are public; when you create an announcement, all students enrolled in the course or section will receive a notification, and they can view the announcement anytime. To create an announcement:

1) – Select *Announcements* in your course navigation menu.

2) Click the maroon *+Announcement* button.

3) Enter the title (optional) and text of your announcement, and click the maroon *Save* button at the lower right.
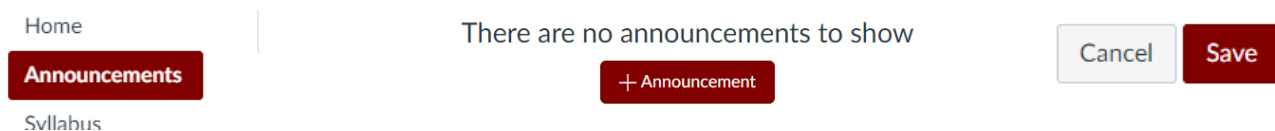
Tips for using Announcements:

1 You can delay posting.

Under *Options*, select the "Delay Posting" check box, and then choose the date and time for the announcement to appear.

2 You can attach files to an announcement.

Click *Choose File* and then add your attachment.

3 You can send announcements to specific sections.

Click the drop-down menu under *Post to* and choose the section you wish to contact.

Communication Method 2: Email/Inbox/Conversations

Canvas' native email tool is called **Conversations**. Unlike Chalk's "Send Email" feature, you do not need to go into a specific course site to email students in that course. To send an email:

1) – Select *Inbox* in your user navigation menu (the dark-gray menu at the far left).

2) Select your course from *the All Courses* drop-down menu.

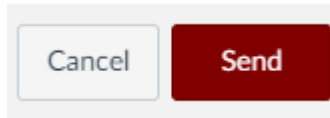3) Click on the pencil icon to begin composing your message.
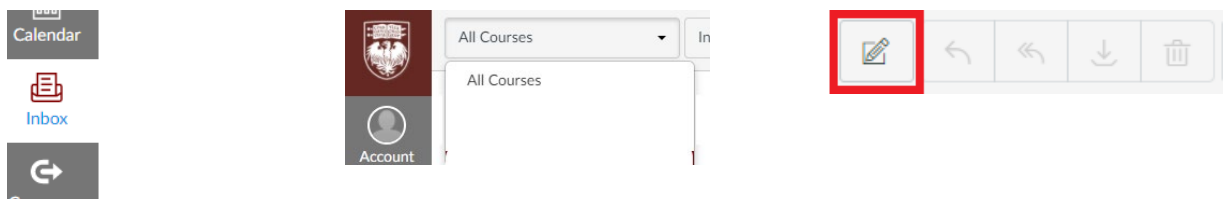
4) To select an addressee, click the address book icon. You can send a message to all course users; all users in a specific role (teachers, students, etc.); student groups; or individual users.
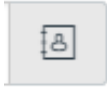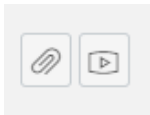
5) When you are done composing your message, click the maroon *Send* button at the lower right.

Tips for using Conversations:

1 You can attach files or audio/video comments to a Conversation.

To attach a file, select the paper clip icon (left); to attach an audio/video comment, click the recording icon (right) and then record your comment.

2 You can disable the "Reply All" function.

To ensure that each recipient receives a separate copy of your email, select "Send an individual message to each recipient" before sending. This will prevent students from accidentally selecting "Reply All" when they respond to you.

3 Conversations are private.

Conversations are best used when you wish to communicate information to specific students or groups of students, and when you do not need a publicly posted record of your communication.

Tips

- Canvas has a native instant messaging system, called **Chat**. To start a chat, simply select *Chat* from the course navigation menu, type your message, and click *Send*. It will then be visible to any course users who are currently in the chat room, and they can respond. Note that **Chat is always public**, and it should not be used when any private or sensitive information is involved.

- Canvas also supports web conferencing, via *Conferences* on the course navigation menu. You can use this tool to hold remote office hours or communicate in real time with students when you cannot hold a face-to-face class meeting. For more information about using Conferences in Canvas, attend our Web Conferencing in Canvas workshop (*courses.uchicago.edu/workshop-schedule/workshop-description*).

- If you wish to receive a copy of announcements you post or emails you send in Conversations, Canvas allows you to do so. To enable this option (which is turned off by default), go to *Account -> Notifications* and click the check mark next to *Announcement Created by You* (for Announcements) or *Conversations Created by Me* (for Conversations), so that it turns green. If you do not wish to enable it, you can always view emails you have sent by opening the *Sent* folder in your inbox. Past announcements can be viewed on the Announcement page on your course site.

- Some notifications in Canvas are automatically sent to students (e.g. when you publish an Assignment or edit it after it has been published). Others are voluntary (e.g. you can notify students when you change a course page by checking "Notify users that this content has changed" before clicking *Save*. Note that this will only notify students who have turned on "Course Content" in their *Notifications* settings; this is turned off for students by default).