

# *The quickest way to navigate Blackboard* NAVIGATING



**A STUDENT'S GUIDE** *for* **BLACKBOARD 6.0 & 5.0**  
by **HAL SPIEGEL**

# **Navigating Blackboard**

**A Student's Guide  
for Blackboard 6.0 and Blackboard 5.0**

LeCroy Center for Educational Telecommunication  
Dallas County Community College District



Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458

Acquisitions Editor: Alison Pendergast  
Editor-in-Chief: Tracy Augustine  
Director of Marketing: Jane Manning Hyatt  
Development Editor: Carol Abalofia  
Senior Managing Editor: Judy Leale  
Design Manager: Maria Lange  
Cover & Interior Design: Michael Fruhbeis  
Associate Director, Multimedia Production: Karen Goldsmith  
Manager, Print Production: Christy Mahon  
Formatter: Carol O'Rourke  
Manufacturing Buyer: Wanda Rockwell  
Cover Printer: Phoenix Color, Inc.  
Printer/Binder: Courier, Bookmart Press

---

Credits and acknowledgments borrowed from other sources and reproduced, with permission, in this textbook appear on appropriate page within text.

---

Copyright © 2004, 2003 by Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 07458. Pearson Prentice Hall. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. This publication is protected by Copyright and permission should be obtained from the publisher prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or likewise. For information regarding permission(s), write to: Rights and Permissions Department.



# Contents

## Module 1 Introduction 1

What Is Blackboard? 1

Learning with a Course Management System 1

Tips for Becoming a Successful Online Learner 2

Communication 3

Organization and Time Management 3

Motivation 3

Active Learning 4

Critical Thinking 4

Effective Reading 4

Technology 5

Campus Resources 5

## Module 2 Getting Started with Blackboard 6

Basic Computer Requirements 6

Internet Access 6

Choosing a Browser 7

Browser Settings 7

Netscape Setup 8

Internet Explorer Setup 9

Special Plugins 11

## Module 3 Accessing Blackboard 12

Bookmarks and Blackboard 12

Logging into Blackboard 12

Blackboard User Interface 15

Navigating Blackboard 15

Customizing Blackboard 16

To Change the Modules 17

To Change the Arrangement of the Modules 17

To Change the Colors of the Modules 18

## Module 4 Navigating Blackboard 19

My Institution 19

Tools 19

User Directory 20

Announcements 20

Calendar 22

Tasks 22

View Grades 23

Send E-mail 24

Address Book 25

Personal Information 26

Courses Tab 27

Accessing a Course 28

Collapsing the Course's Navigation 29

Community and Services Tabs 29

Academic Web Resources Tab 30

**Module 5 Course Content 31**

- Announcements 32
- Course Information 33
- Staff Information 33
- Course Documents 33
- Assignments 34
  - To Take a Quiz 35
- Communication and Discussion Board 37
- External links 37

**Module 6 Communication 38**

- E-mail 38
- Collaboration 40
  - View, Clear, and Breakout Tool Bar 40
  - Virtual Classroom Tools 41
- Discussion Boards 42

**Module 7 Additional Tools 45**

- Digital Drop Box 46
- Edit Your Homepage 50
- Electronic Blackboard 52

**Module 8 Where To Go for Online Help 53**

- The Blackboard Manual 53
- Blackboard Homepage 54
- Additional Internet Help Sites 54
- Frequently Asked Questions about Blackboard 56

**Appendix: Blackboard 5.0 58**

- Blackboard Gateway 59
- Navigating Blackboard 61
- Customizing Blackboard 61
- My Institution 62
  - Tools 62
- Courses Tab 63
  - Accessing a Course 64
  - Quizzes 64
  - How To Take a Quiz 65
- Communication Tools 67
  - Virtual Classroom/Chat 67
- Additional Tools 69

**Index 71**

# Module 1 Introduction

## What Is Blackboard?

Blackboard is a comprehensive e-Learning software platform that delivers a course management system through the flexibility of the Internet. This system offers you a set of robust tools, functions, and features for interactive learning. Professors are able to customize content based on the your needs and course requirements. Using the system's many features, you are able to read announcements, access assignments, take tests, upload completed projects, and communicate with the instructor and other students.

## Learning with a Course Management System

You may be new to using an online course management system, or perhaps you have had experience with one before. In either case, here is a checklist to help you become a better learner in an online environment.

- ✓ **Take time to familiarize yourself with the Web site for your course.** Find out the course schedule, the course requirements, the method for contacting your instructor, the help files, and so on.
- ✓ **Review any informational files on your course, and experiment with the navigation.** Try the different links to see where they go. (No, you won't destroy anything by doing this!)
- ✓ **Log in to the course site regularly.** Look for announcements or updates to the course.

- ✓ **Participate in the activities that have been designed for your course—bulletin board discussions, chat sessions, and so on.** These activities are part of your classroom experience.
- ✓ **Contact your instructor (or whomever your instructor has appointed) whenever you have questions or problems with the software.** You can also post questions to your class discussion area. Your classmates may answer you before your instructor does.
- ✓ **Plan for deadlines.** Computers are much less forgiving than your instructor! If a test needs to be taken by 4 P.M., Blackboard will not allow you to access it at 4:01.
- ✓ **Be prepared.** Keep in mind that your Internet connectivity may have disruptions in service. It is possible that your or your school's Internet service may become unavailable. It is a good idea to leave a little extra time for connecting, uploading, and downloading files to ensure you meet your deadlines.
- ✓ **Remember that your online course is a public place.** Speak and behave with the same politeness and respect expected in any classroom. (If you find you've posted something that embarrasses you or that gives the wrong impression, ask your instructor to remove it from the course site.)

For further information about learning effectively with Blackboard, consult:  
<http://www.blackboard.com>.

### **Tips for Becoming a Successful Online Learner**

Congratulations! You are about to embark on a journey that will take your learning to a new level. You may meet some new challenges along the way. This guide will help you meet those challenges by helping you begin to navigate Blackboard to find many online

resources intended to help you succeed in the course you are studying. You're on your way to becoming a successful online learner.

### **COMMUNICATION**

- ✓ Know how to access your Blackboard course Web site along with your login information. Ask your instructor.
- ✓ Check the site frequently for changes and updates.
- ✓ Learn and use proper “netiquette” by visiting Web sites such as the St. Louis Community College guide at <http://www.stlcc.cc.mo.us/distance/text/netiquette.html>.

### **ORGANIZATION AND TIME MANAGEMENT**

- ✓ Develop a system to keep track of assignments, deadlines, and materials.
- ✓ Schedule time on a regular basis to review your assignments and activities and to back-up and save your work.
- ✓ Be realistic by setting interim goals and deadlines for yourself and stick to them!
- ✓ Attend a time management seminar or learn about time management on the Web at a site like Harper College's PowerPoint presentation at <http://www.harpercollege.edu/doit/dlinfo/tmpres.shtml>.

### **MOTIVATION**

- ✓ Stick to your time-management plan and schedules by staying motivated.
- ✓ Some motivation tips from University of Texas Austin can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/makinggrade/practical.html>.

**ACTIVE LEARNING**

- ✓ Become an active learner by determining your personal learning style and taking advantage of how you learn best.
- ✓ You can discover your learning style by taking an assessment such as the DVC Survey by Catherine Jester on the Internet at [http://www.metamath.com/multiple/multiple\\_choice\\_questions.cgi](http://www.metamath.com/multiple/multiple_choice_questions.cgi).

**CRITICAL THINKING**

- ✓ Just because it's on the Internet, don't believe that everything you read is true.
- ✓ Learn to evaluate sources.
- ✓ University of Minnesota's Web site provides a starting point for you to discover the benefits of critical thinking at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/citizenship/DH5645.html>.

**EFFECTIVE READING**

- ✓ Be sure to read your instructor's directions and assignments carefully.
- ✓ Take advantage of reading resources to get the most out of your Pearson textbook and the course's Blackboard Web site by learning more about reading effectively.
- ✓ Visit the Dartmouth College Web site at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/%7eacskills/success/reading.html> for more information on reading.

**TECHNOLOGY**

- ✓ Plan ahead for technical glitches because they will happen. Sometimes access is unavailable or a computer lab may be full.
- ✓ Allow extra time for completing coursework so that technical glitches don't cause you to miss a deadline.
- ✓ Learn how to use your school's version of Blackboard and know the course policies, so that you can focus on the course content.

**CAMPUS RESOURCES**

- ✓ Your school will probably have some type of support services for Blackboard. Take advantage of these services, which may include help services, tutorials, or booklets written just for your school.
- ✓ Most schools have an academic support or study-skills office that is ready to help you adapt to the online learning environment. Visit their office or Web site.
- ✓ Some schools provide support online for Blackboard on the campus Web site. Find out if your school provides additional support online
- ✓ Ask your classmates for help too. They may have an idea or solution they can share with you.

**Stay focused and have fun!**

# Module 2 Getting Started with Blackboard

## Basic Computer Requirements

Following are the minimum hardware requirements:

- ✓ 75Mhz Pentium or equivalent
- ✓ 32 Megabytes of RAM
- ✓ 14.4 modem with Internet access
- ✓ preferred—multimedia capabilities with sound and CD-ROM

We recommend that you get the fastest multimedia computer and modem that you can, with as much RAM as possible. The faster your system, the less time you will spend waiting. If you are using the latest browsers, their minimum requirements are a Pentium III with 128MB of RAM. Let your budget be your guide.

## Internet Access

You can access your college or university Blackboard system from anywhere you find an Internet connection. Access speed will vary depending on your data connection. For example, a campus lab may offer a T1 connection rate that transfers information at 1.5 MB per second, while your home computer may have a rate of 28 KB per second. This would mean that you could access information more than 50 times faster on campus than at home. Speed will vary depending on the number of simultaneous users.

## Choosing a Browser

Blackboard functions the same across both Apple and PC based platforms. No matter which computer system you use, it must run Netscape 4.0 (or higher) or Internet Explorer 4.0 (or higher) as your Internet browser in order to access Blackboard. Blackboard has suggested versions of browsers that have been thoroughly tested and are recommended for using this system. See Figure 8.4 on page 56 in the “Frequently Asked Questions” section for these suggestions.

## Browser Settings

Blackboard uses the full potential of the Internet’s capabilities, and in order for your setup to work correctly, you must set your browser to accept all cookies and have Java and JavaScript enabled. These options are set correctly when your browser is initially installed using the default settings. Changing these options may be necessary only if you are using someone else’s computer like a friend’s or the campus lab’s where these options may have been modified. It is always good to check with the lab technician or the owner of the computer before making any of these modifications. This example uses Netscape 7.0 on a Windows XP platform. If you need additional assistance, refer to Help in the menu bar of your browser.

## NETSCAPE SETUP

First open your Netscape Browser. Click on **Edit**, then **Preferences**. (See Figure 2.1.)

After you click **Preferences**, the preferences box appears. In the lower left-hand area, click the **Advanced** option. Your right-hand panel options will change from the Navigator option to the Advanced

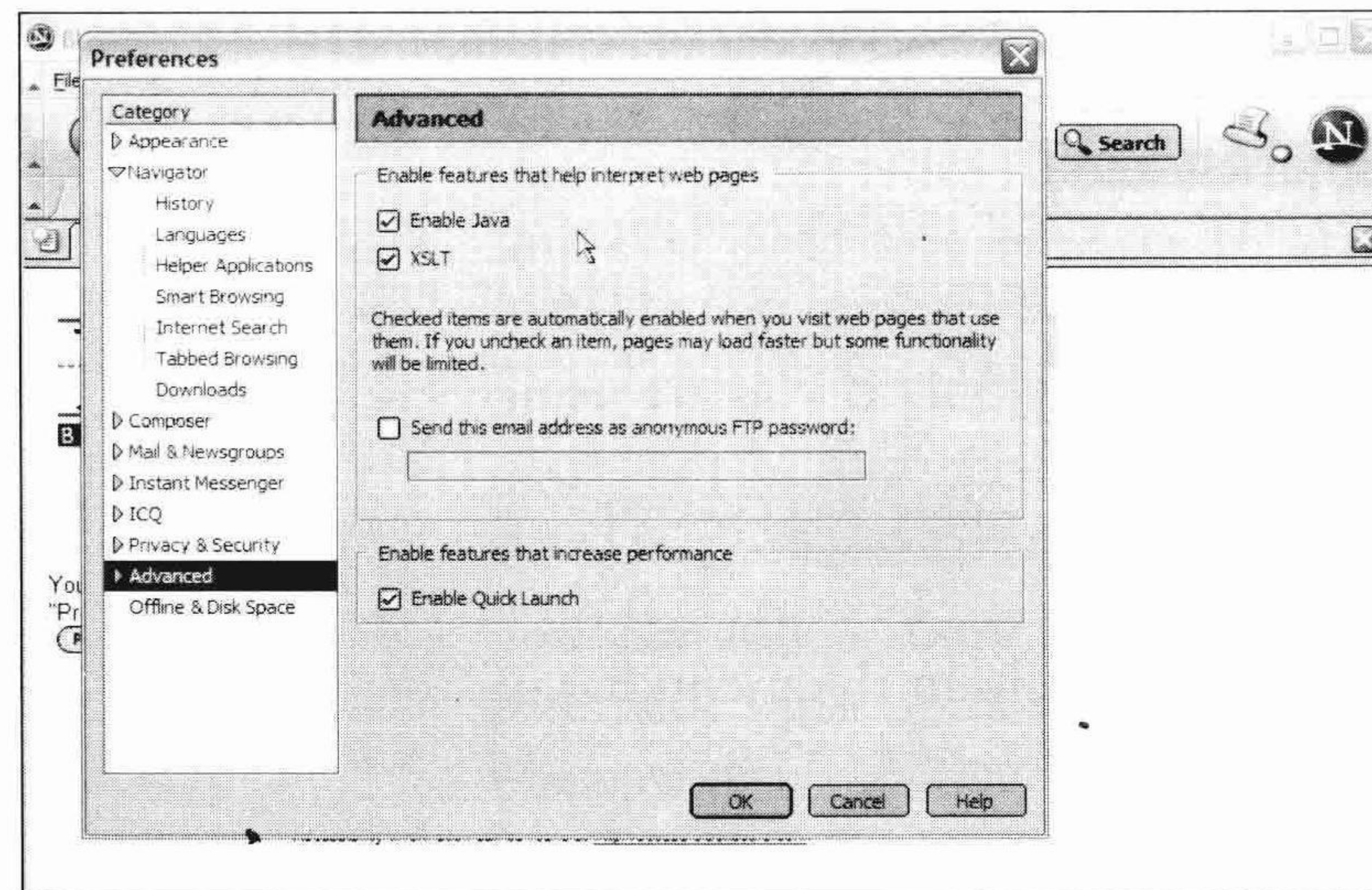


FIGURE 2.2 ADVANCED OPTIONS.

After highlighting **Advanced**, you can enable Java. This example uses Netscape 7.0 on a Windows XP platform. If you need additional assistance, refer to Help in the menu bar of your browser.

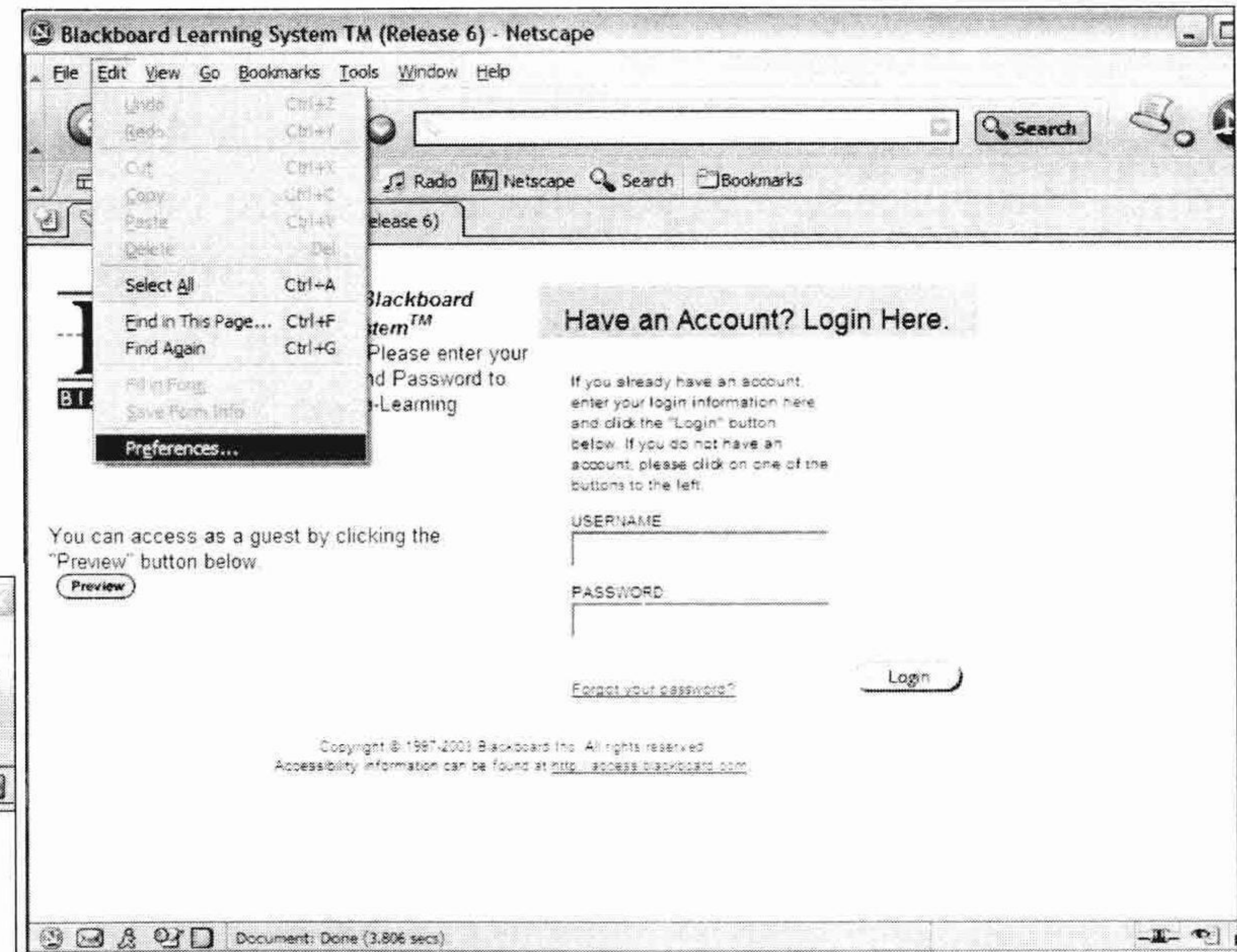


FIGURE 2.1 NETSCAPE SETUP.

You will find Preferences under the Edit menu option.

option. If there is not a check there already, place a check to the left of these items: Enable Java, XSLT, Enable Quick Launch. (See Figure 2.2.)

Next, click in **Scripts & Plugins**. At the top you will see: Enable JavaScript for—**Navigator** needs to be checked. At the bottom, checks need to be placed by both: Create or change cookies and Read cookies. (See Figure 2.3.) Additional options that are checked will not affect the functionality of Blackboard. Click **OK** once you've made these selections.

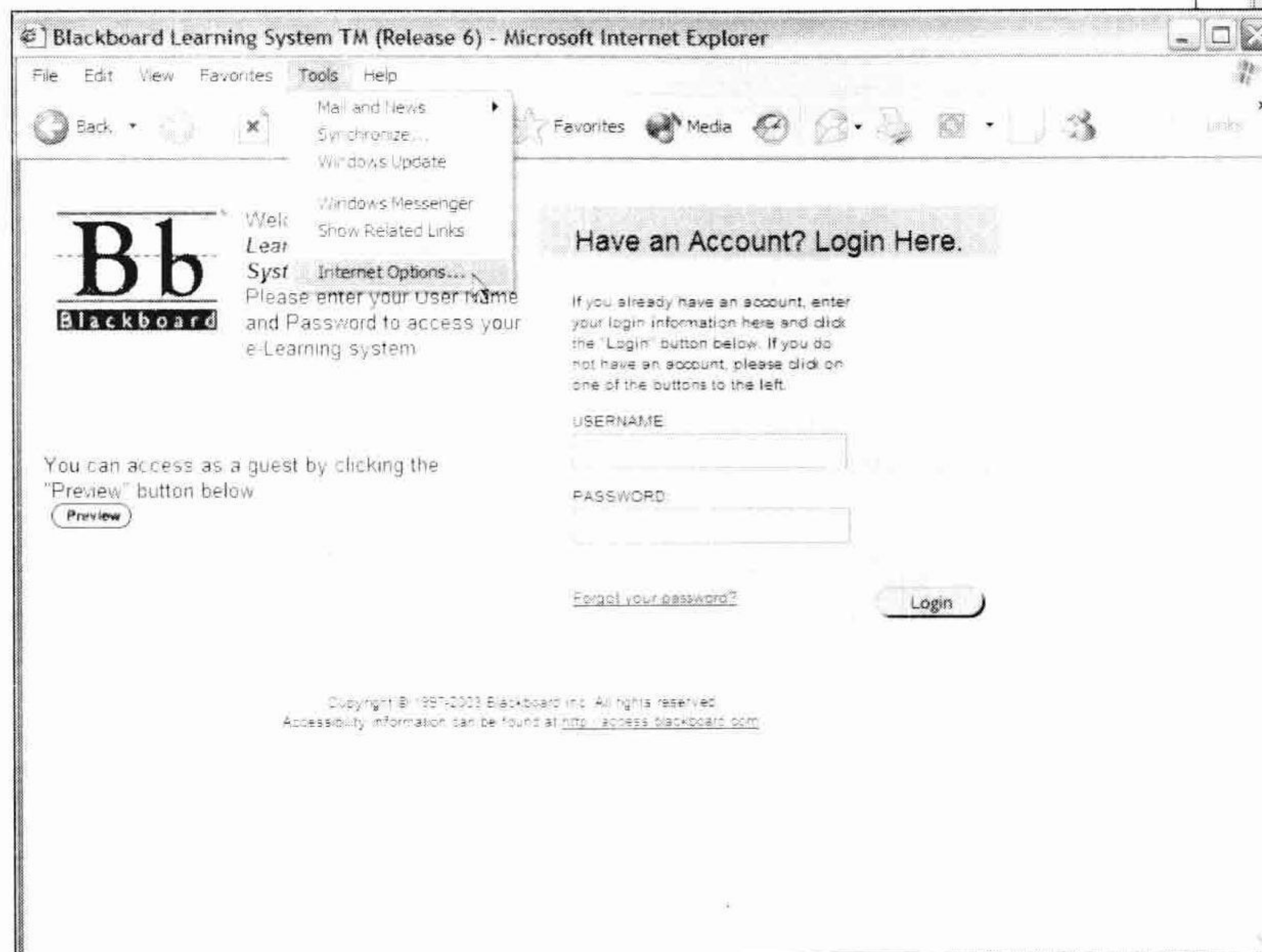


FIGURE 2.4 INTERNET EXPLORER SETUP.  
You will find Internet Options under the Tools menu.

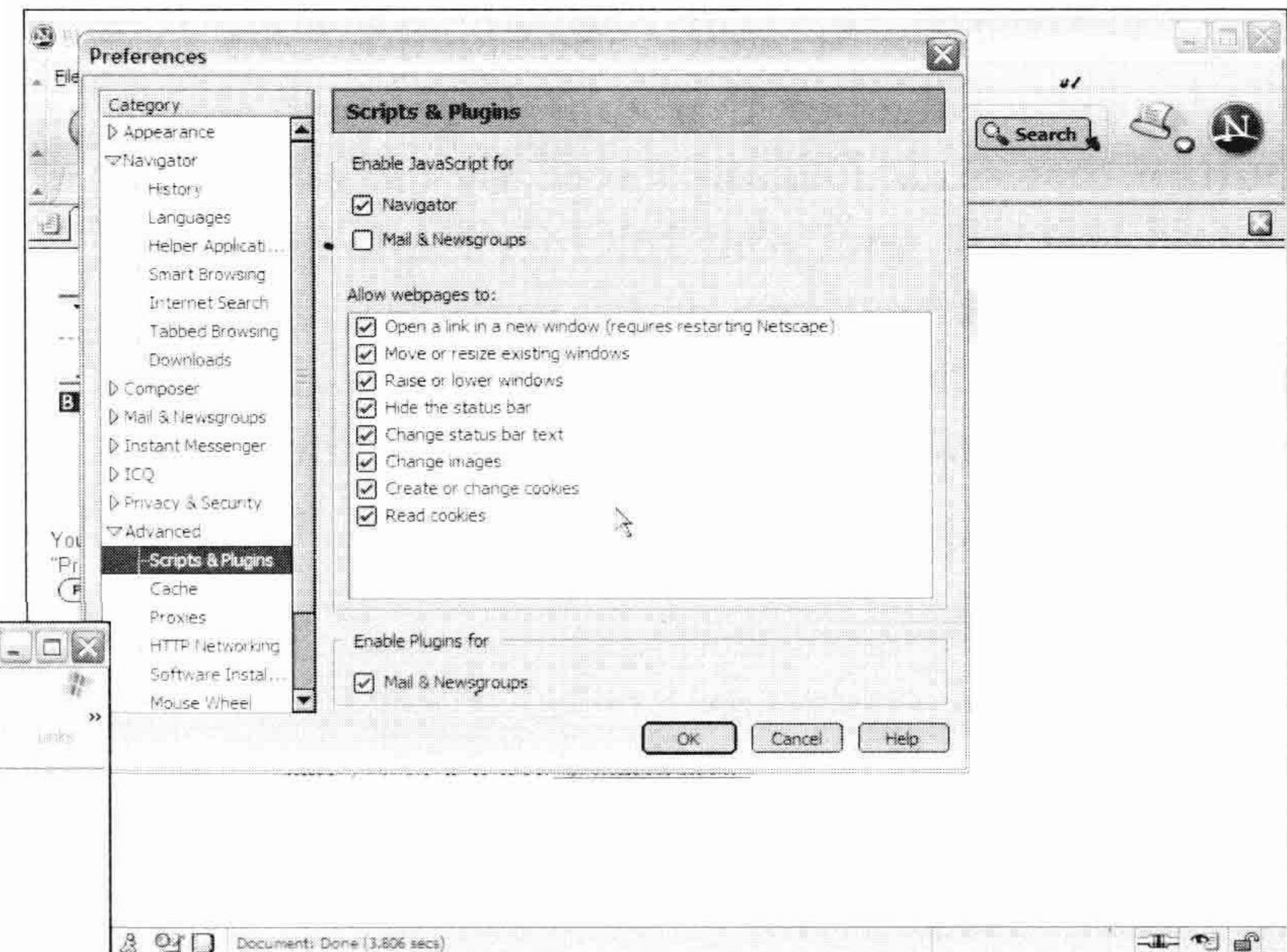


FIGURE 2.3  
Under Advanced→Scripts & Plugins, both **Create or change cookies** and **Read cookies** need to be enabled.

## INTERNET EXPLORER SETUP

The setup for Microsoft's Internet Explorer is a little different. First, open Internet Explorer, then click on **Tools** and **Internet Options**, as Figure 2.4 shows.

Next, click on **Security**. (See Figure 2.5.) At the bottom of the box that appears you will see a button that reads Default Level. By clicking this option you will reset your Internet Explorer to its original security settings, which meet Blackboard's needs. Next, click the **Advanced** tab in the top right-hand corner. At the bottom of the box you

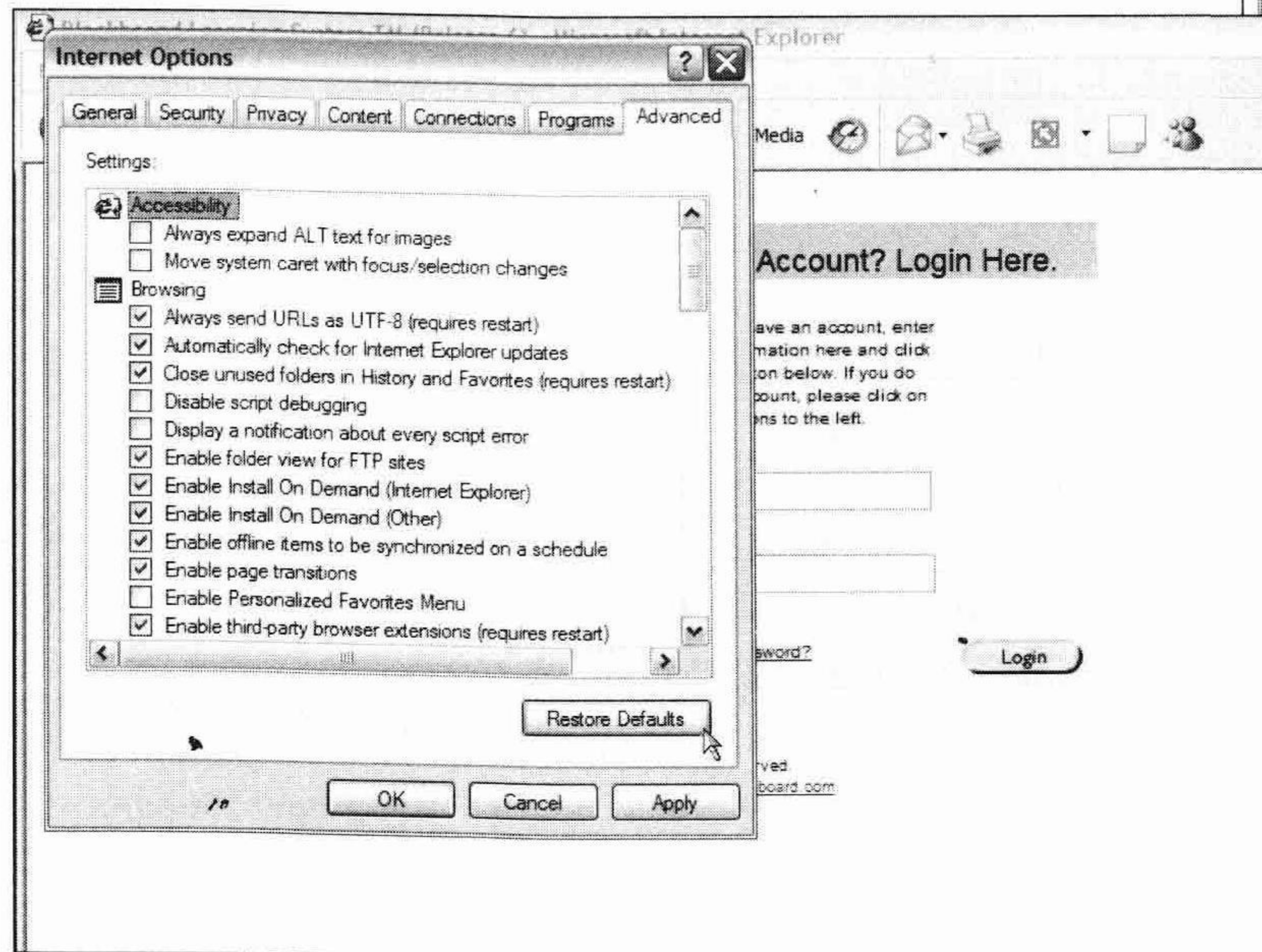


FIGURE 2.6 INTERNET EXPLORER AND RESTORE DEFAULTS.  
You will find the Restore Defaults button under the Advanced tab.\*



FIGURE 2.5 INTERNET EXPLORER AND BLACKBOARD.  
You will find the Default Level button under the Security tab.

will see Restore Defaults. Click this to restore the original settings. See Figure 2.6 if you have any questions.

## Special Plugins

Courses may require plugins that allow specific types of content to play on your computer, like video segments, PowerPoint presentations, and Flash animations. Ask your instructor if your course requires any specific plugins.

## Module 3 Accessing Blackboard

To access your institution's Blackboard Web site, you must have the Web address, often called its URL (Universal Resource Locator). The college catalog and the campus' Web site usually provide links to this site, but if you cannot find this information, contact your professor. Your professor is usually the best resource for answers to your questions.

### Bookmarks and Blackboard

Bookmarks are not functional within Blackboard because Blackboard uses dynamically created Web pages. For example, imagine you were in a document within a specific area of your course, like the course syllabus, and you created a bookmark with the idea of being able to easily return to the syllabus later. Your bookmark would not work once you logged out of that session. If you later tried to use your bookmark, you would first be taken to a login screen and then brought to a general area within your course.

### Logging into Blackboard

After you have the URL for your school's Blackboard system, enter it into the address bar of your browser. There are two different views that may appear depending on how your college or university chose to set up Blackboard. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the standard login screen, and Figure 3.2 shows direct portal entry. The main benefit to direct portal entry is that the student is not required to log in to receive information. Campus news, login procedures, and