

# Sections/Groups in Canvas

## What are sections and groups?

Sections and groups are both subsets of students in a course. In Canvas, there are different functions attached to sections and groups (see table below) and there are different methods for creating and managing them.

## What can sections and groups do in Canvas?

	Section	Group
Created Automatically & Synch with Axess	Yes	No
Created Manually; Students added by Teaching Staff	<a href="#">Yes</a>	<a href="#">Yes</a>
Allow Students to Self-Join	No	<a href="#">Yes</a>
Send Announcements	Yes	<a href="#">Yes</a>
Send Inbox Messages	<a href="#">Yes</a>	<a href="#">Yes</a>
Set Access to Assignments	<a href="#">Yes</a>	No*
Allow students to submit Assignments as a group	No	<a href="#">Yes</a>
Set Access to Discussions	<a href="#">Yes</a>	<a href="#">Yes</a>
Set Access to Files	No	<a href="#">Yes</a>
Set Access to Pages	No	<a href="#">Yes</a>
Set Access to Quizzes	<a href="#">Yes</a>	No
Filter display in Grades	<a href="#">Yes</a>	No
Filter display in SpeedGrader	<a href="#">Yes</a>	No
Teaching Staff can be a member	Yes	No
Students can post announcements and upload files	No	Yes

\* Group assignments (one assignment submitted by whole group) can be restricted to a particular group or groups, but assignments submitted individually can not be restricted to a group.

## How are sections/groups created and populated with students?

- Official Axess sections are added to course sites automatically. Membership of these sections will sync with Axess enrollment. You can find them under Settings > Sections.
- If you previously used Section Info in CourseWork to manage section sign-ups for discussion or lab sections, see the instructions for creating groups below. Students can only self-join groups.
- Teaching staff can create sections manually:
  - Go to Settings > Sections.
  - Enter a section name in the Add a New Section Field and click +Section.
  - More details: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2965>
- Teaching staff can add students to sections:
  - Go to People.
  - Click the Settings menu (gear icon) next to the desired student's name and select Edit Sections.
  - Type the desired section's name in the section name field or click the directory icon to show a list of sections.
  - Select the desired section.
  - Click Update.
  - More details: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2967>
- Teaching staff can create group sets and groups:
  - Go to People.
  - Click the +Group Set button in the upper right of the page.
  - Enter a group set name.
  - Check the 'Allow self sign-up' option if you want students to self-join. If using, enter a number of groups and group limit.
  - If not using 'Allow self sign-up', choose whether to split up students into equal groups or to create groups manually.
  - Click Save.
  - If you need to edit group names or capacity, click the group tab, select Edit from the Settings menu next to the desired group to make changes.
  - You can also use the +Group button to create more groups.

- More details: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-1946>
- Teaching staff can add students to groups:
  - **Students can only belong to one group per group set.**
  - Go to People.
  - Click the desired group tab.
  - Drag and drop a student (listed on left of page) to the desired group. You can also click the + icon next to the student's name to assign a section.
  - If you need to change a student's group, click the expanding triangle next to the student's current group, click the + icon next to the student's name and select a different group.
  - More details: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2815>
- Students can join groups (if that option has been enabled in the group set):
  - **The People tool must be visible to students on the [course navigation menu](#) to allow them to join groups.**
  - Student View function (Settings > Student View) does not reflect self-joining groups properly. Groups will appear locked, even though they are available for real students.
  - Steps for students:
    - Go to People.
    - Click the Groups tab.
    - Click Join next to desired group.
    - Click Switch to or Leave to make group membership changes.
  - More details: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-3169>

## Missing functionality in sections/groups? (Section <-> Group cloning tool)

Since both Sections and Groups have only a subset of desired functionality for managing large courses, we created a special tool called 'Section <-> Group' to clone sections from groups or groups from sections to allow all functions to be applied to the same subset of students.

### Usage scenarios

- If you use official Axess sections, but want to be able to create section-specific announcements or content, this can be done by cloning groups to match the sections.
- If you want students to self-join sections within Canvas instead of Axess, you can only allow self-join in groups. You can then clone sections to match those groups to allow for filtering grades or creating section-specific assignments.

Any changes made to original sections/groups will sync with the clones, but changes to clones will not update originals and will be wiped out upon the next sync. Sync happens once a day at 2:00am, but the Sync Now button can be used to force manual updates.

The Section <-> Group tool is only visible to teaching staff.

- Teaching staff can enable this tool:
  - Go to Settings > Navigation.
  - At the bottom of the page, drag the Section <-> Group tool to the top set of tools to access it in the toolbar. Place in any order you desire.
  - Click Save at the bottom of the page.
- Teaching staff can clone sections:
  - If using official Axxess sections, avoid selecting the lecture sections that include all students, as that will result in a membership inaccuracies, since groups only allow students to belong to one group per group set.
  - Go to Section <-> Group.
  - In the Sections tab, select the sections you want to clone.
  - Click the Clone as Group button.
- Teaching staff can clone groups:
  - Go to Section <-> Group.
  - Select the Groups tab.
  - Select a group set to clone all groups within that set or expand the group set (triangle icon) to select individual groups you want to clone.
  - Click the Clone as Section button.
- Teaching staff can force updates in membership to cloned sections/groups:
  - Go to Section <-> Group.
  - Click the Sync Now button.