# How are files handled in Moodle, WebCT and Sakai?

## In Moodle

Only instructors can access a complete view of a course site's files in Administration > Files. There is no personal file space for student users (unless the student attaches or posts files to a designated activity, e.g. Forum, Assignment). In theory, this means Instructors can use the site to store all their course-related files, including those they donâ€™t want students to see or download.

**ALERT FOR INSTRUCTORS!** As of this writing (Moodle 1.8.2, November 2007), enrolled Students who know the name of a specific file on the site, or who have access to cached file URLs, can access those files if they can guess or recapture the URL of the course file — even if there is no visible link to that file on the course page!

So, for example, The file path of any file on the CCLE server is http://ccle.ucla.edu/file.php/[course id]/[folder name]/file name. For example, the course id for the ITC test site ( http://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view.php?id=6 , which can be found by right-clicking the course title on the ccle site and looking into the Properties) is 6, and there is a file called â€œfirst.pdfâ€ in the File area, and the fileâ€™s path is http://ccle.ucla.edu/file.php/6/first.pdf.
Also, files used for quizzes, assignment, and other activities are usually put under the folder of â€œmoddataâ€, and course backup files are under the folder of â€œbackupdataâ€. So if a students knows the folder name and the file name, itâ€™d be easy for that student to get access to the file, no matter the folder itself is hidden or not on the course page.

Here are the relevant Jira tickets:

- Jira for CCLE: http://jira.ats.ucla.edu/browse/CCLE-304
- Moodle Tracker: http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/MDL-10701
- Moodle.org Forum discussion: http://moodle.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=77059

**Recommendations to prevent students accessing hidden files:**

1. **A way to prevent unwanted discovery of your hidden files.** Make a directory with an odd/unguessable name, then put any files that are to be hidden from students in there and though the students might predict the filename (e.g. midterm, final, etc.) they won't know the directory name.

2. **Don’t change the name of any folder in Files that is created by the Moodle system.** If you set up an activity (quiz, assignment,forum, wiki, etc.), and students upload a file in that activity (say, assignment, or an attached file with the forum post), the system creates automatically a folder named “moddata” in the “Files” area, and all the files uploaded via the Moodle activities are stored there. If the instructor changes the name of that folder, neither the instructor nor the students will be able to get access to the uploaded files via the activity any more. For example, attachments with forum posts will disappear, and the number of submitted assignments will become “0”. Furthermore, the system will create another folder named “moddata”, and new uploaded files will go there instead.

# In WebCT

Only instructors can access the MyFiles area. There is no personal file space on the WebCT server for student users (unless files are attached or posted to a designated tool, e.g. Discussion Board, Assignment, Student Presentations, Student Homepages). What this means: Instructors can use the site to store all their course-related files, including those they donâ€™t want students to see or download, because only instructors(designers) have access to them. This means, for example, that Word and Powerpoint originals can be stored on the site along with the PDFs and HTML galleries that are meant for student view. Thus, instructors can use the WebCT or Moodle system to store ALL their course files.

# In Sakai

Every user has a MyWorkspace area to store their private files. What this means: Instructors can store all course-related files, including those they donâ€™t want students to see or download, in their own MyWorkspace area. But, they must keep the originals and files they donâ€™t want students to see in MyWorkspace — they can only add the PDFs and HTML galleries of original Word and PPT docs to the sites themselves, where students can view them. Thus, instructors can use the Sakai system to store ALL their course files, but must be careful to store hidden files in MyWorkspace only. Students can also store course-related (or other!) files in their MyWorkspace area.

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