

# D2L vs. Canvas Mobile Experience

## Preface

This document highlights and compares the mobile experiences of using D2L and Canvas. The mobile experience was evaluated using an iPad on iOS 7.1.1 and an Android tablet on Jelly Bean 4.1.2. Both the Canvas and D2L apps were downloaded on each device in addition to accessing the mobile website of D2L. To evaluate the experiences from both Learning Management Systems, several real world scenarios were analyzed. Additionally, since the experiences for D2L were divided into two places, there is also a section that discusses the benefits from Apps versus websites that have been adapted to the mobile platform. All of this information is then compiled into a final conclusion.

## Scenarios

### Accessing PowerPoint File

On Binder, you can access the files for a course and then download them to your device. They are easy to view in this manner. Or you can add poor annotations to them. Or you can export the file to another App for manipulation if you can find the camouflaged “Share Button”

On Desire2Learn Mobile website, you can see all of the content of the course and find the file you are searching for. Once found, you can view the file in an awkward window within the webpage. This is annoying on a touch screen device because it is clunky to scroll through the file view page which is on top of a webpage that can also be scrolled through. Fortunately, you can download the file to “Open In...” any App.

On the Canvas App, you can access the content of the course as a module. Once you find the file for this weeks lecture you can view it in the App or “Open In...” any App for manipulation.

### Taking Notes

On Binder, the note-taking features are very clunky. For example, usability is very similar to Adobe Reader App on tablets. Therefore, I would never suggest or actually see individuals using this method when robust options such as Evernote and iAnnotate PDF are available.

On Desire2Learn Mobile website, the only way to take notes in this manner is open the document into another App on the device such as Evernote and iAnnotate PDF.

On Canvas, the only way to take notes in this manner is open the document into another App on the device such as Evernote and iAnnotate PDF. However, they ability to do this is very visible and it seems that this is the intention with canvas: to use other tools with it.

## Submitting an Assignment

On Binder, assignments submission is not possible.

On Desire2Learn Mobile website, only pictures and videos can be submitted by an iOS device. Android allows upload from Dropbox or Google Drive or local files, plus many others.

On Canvas, you can “Open In...” from any other App to submit a document that was created or manipulated in another App on your device. Therefore, you can submit all manner of documents via the Canvas App. Additionally, you can use Dropbox or your Camera Roll files as submissions.

## Discussions with Peers

On Binder, discussions are not possible.

On Desire2Learn Mobile website, the Discussions are very similar to the computer experience. However, with the on screen keyboard, the view of the words you were typing is blocked until you adjust the screen. Nevertheless, it is possible to interact on the discussions with your Peers directly from a tablet in this manner.

On Canvas, there are ways to not only have public discussions with those in the class, but you can also send messages to specific individuals. Also, there is a NOTIFICATIONS feature built into this App that will alert you.

## Watching a Video

On Binder, videos can be streamed from the “Fetch” section, but cannot be “Fetched” to the local storage of the device for streaming offline.

On Desire2Learn Mobile website, videos are listed under the content section where applicable and can be viewed within the web browser.

On Canvas, videos are integrated directly into the modules and can be viewed within the App.

## Figuring Out When Content is Due

On Binder, it is not possible to access the due dates for Dropbox submissions.

On Desire2Learn Mobile website, students can access the Dropbox submissions page like they would on a computer.

On Canvas, assignments in the “Assignments” section all have due dates under them. Additionally, you can setup To Do List items to help you manage your course content.

## View My Grade

On Binder, viewing grades is not possible.

On Desire2Learn Mobile website, viewing grades is possible and looks like it does on the computer.

On Canvas, viewing grades is possible.

#### Access Content Offline

On Binder, content you want accessible offline must be “Fetched” prior to being offline. Also, there is a limit to the storage of local content on your device (1GB) and this does not allow for saving of course videos.

On Desire2Learn Mobile website, offline access is not possible

On Canvas, offline access is not possible

## Apps vs Mobile Websites

Hardly anyone uses Facebook via their web browser on their mobile device anymore. Why? Because the experience has been optimized for the device via a mobile App experience. But what does this mean?

#### Time

Apps allow us to quickly, (in a tap or two) access the information we are after. **Students don't have to enter log in information and navigate through menus or file folder systems to access what they need.**

#### Essence

Without a doubt, canvas provides a much better experience on their App than D2L. The Binder app is great for accessing the content of the course. But that is where it's advantage ends. The mobile website for Desire2Learn is more well equipped to allow students to do more than viewing the content of a course. In other words, **the Binder App is more about distributing content to students and the Canvas App is about distributing content in addition to interacting with peers and the instructor.**

#### Navigation

Currently the Desire2Learn mobile website is the avenue to access a course I would suggest to a fellow student over the Binder App (which is just too limited). Therefore, we need to discuss navigation of this versus the Canvas App. **Since the Desire2Learn mobile website lacks the optimization of an App, I find myself pressing the wrong content because the size of the content is so small on the screen and my fingers are too large to pick out small words on a page in order to navigate the website. You can zoom in and out on the website to avoid this, but then it takes much more effort to navigate through pages if you have to keep zooming in and out of them.**

That being said, the Canvas app has the buttons and banners much more spread out. Therefore, these items are much easier for my fingers to distinguish when pressing on the screen.

### Independence

With the Canvas App, assignments can be submitted from any other App when documents are “Opened In...” to Canvas. On the other hand, Binder does not support file submissions for assignments and the Desire2Learn mobile webpages only supports limited upload options. **Therefore, with the Desire2Learn system, tablet users are not independent of a computer since they have to revisit one every time they need to make a submission. In contrast, all of my work could be done on my tablet using the Canvas LMS.**

## Conclusion

Between the D2L and Canvas usage for students, Canvas has the better mobile experience, particularly on iPad. First, the Canvas experience is not divided into two places to interact with the LMS like with D2L. On D2L, in order to view documents offline and annotate content, you have to use the Binder App. However, you give up all the interactivity of D2L when you are working in the Binder App. Therefore, you have to also log into the D2L mobile website to engage in discussions and view grades, etc. **Therefore, the D2L Binder App is more a content distribution experience than interactive. On the other hand, all of the content distribution and interactive elements (such as discussions) are housed in the Canvas app for the Canvas LMS.**

Additionally, the Canvas app offers complete independence from computers to complete work, making it a viable option to facilitate classroom activities that utilize the LMS. For example, in courses with iPad initiatives, the professor could assign a worksheet on Canvas during class. Students could access this document, bring it into another App for manipulation, and then submit the final draft within the Canvas App without ever touching a computer. In contrast, with D2L, the students could access such a document in a class activity, but they would need to visit a computer to submit the assignment to the Dropbox. Thus, Canvas is capable of facilitating activities within classes, where D2L cannot. In other words, **Canvas has a higher potential of enhancing the student learning experience by being capable of streamlining student interaction with course materials.**

One for the perspectives I kept in mind while I was working on this analysis was the SAMR model. This is helpful for educators who are attempting to integrate technology into student learning. In this model, there is a hierarchy of how well the technology is transforming the learning. **And from this model, I would place my Canvas experience on the Modification level and my D2L experience on the Augmentation level.** The D2L mobile experience is a great substitute for what is expected from the computer version of D2L (considering the mobile website is identical to the normal computer website). However, with the added benefits from the Binder App, and the benefit of mobility, the D2L LMS on a tablet is capable of functional improvement over the computer experience. On the other hand, the Canvas app is a more transformative

experience for student learning. More than just a content delivery system, the Canvas App allows independence from a computer. In other words, it is possible to complete an entire semester class from a tablet. How is this a transformative experience? Because the LMS can be realistically utilized in a class for activities. Instructors could facilitate discussion or learning activities on a tablet or smartphone in class using Canvas and expect student interaction and assignment submission right from their devices in the class period. Additionally, with the access to the software on a tablet, students could submit all manner of diagrams, collaborative papers, slideshows, and worksheets to enhance their learning experience. Whereas, the D2L mobile experience on an iPad would require visiting a computer to submit any documents to instructors for review.

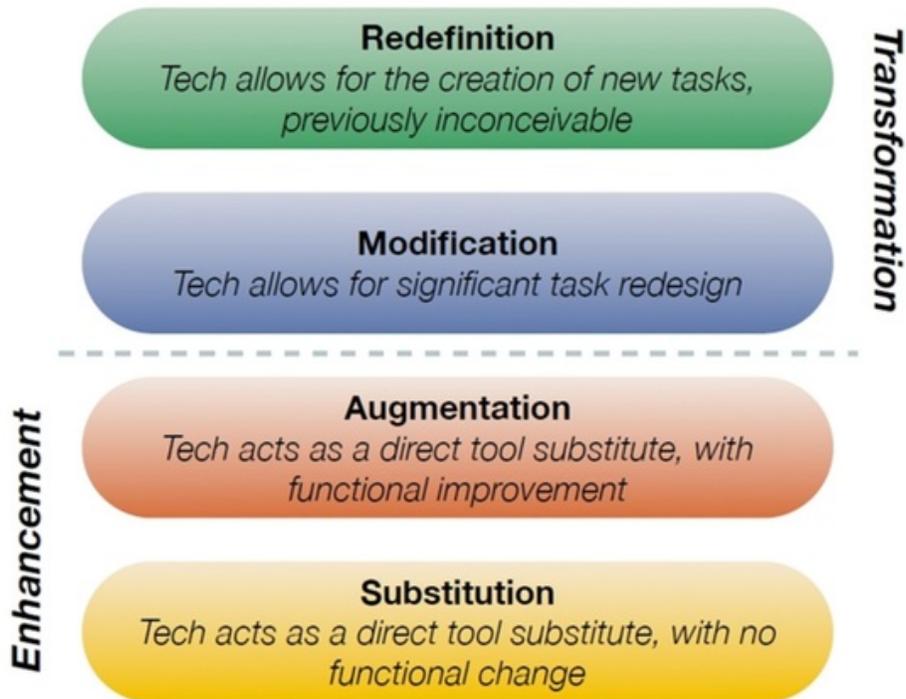


Figure: SAMR Model by Dr. Ruben Puentedura, Ph.D. <http://www.hippasus.com/>

Finally, regardless of which LMS is chosen in the end, the most important thing for the University to do is provide training to instructors to help them utilize the appropriate features that will enhance the learning that takes place in their courses.