

Due Dates vs. Availability Dates

What's the Difference?

How Do I Use Due Dates and Availability Dates?

A common point of confusion for instructors is when to use due dates and when to use availability dates. The main recommendation is to always use due dates. Anything that is graded and requires students to submit something NEEDS a due date. Availability dates are not required, but can be used if an instructor wants to lock down an assignment so that students can't interact with it anymore.

Rule of Thumb: Every assignment needs a **Due Date**. Only add **Availability Dates** if you explicitly need to restrict access. Leaving availability open allows students to view instructions early and submit late work if allowed.

 An Until date overrides the submission window.

If the Until date comes before the Due Date, students can be locked out even though Canvas tells them the assignment isn't due yet.

Feature	What It Does	Impact on Students
Due Date	The official deadline to submit work.	Puts the item on the students' Calendar, To-do list, and Dashboard.
Available From	The date/time that students can first view the assignment.	Prevents students from working ahead too early.
Until (Lock Date)	The hard cutoff for when the submission window completely closes.	Prevents any late submissions. This date can be the same as the due date or can be a few days later to allow for late submissions.