

# HTML Templates vs Creator+ vs SoftChalk

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Instructors have access to multiple tools which are designed to facilitate the creation of visually appealing and interactive content to engage students. Instructors can create highly interactive course content files using **HTML Templates** and **Creator+**, as well as create entire multi-page online lessons and activities using **SoftChalk**. While all three tools share many similarities, each serves a different purpose, and the tool that is best suited for you to use depends on multiple factors. This article will help you determine what tool is best for your specific needs.

**NOTE:** Currently it is not recommended to use **Creator+** with **HTML Templates** simultaneously, as it may cause unintended behavior with your course file.

## HTML Templates

**HTML Templates** (<https://vtac.lonestar.edu/help/getting-started-with-html-templates>) allow instructors to create great-looking, accessible, and interactive HTML course content pages using premade templates called **Layouts** (<https://vtac.lonestar.edu/help/html-template-catalog>). These instructor-friendly layouts are designed to be edited using the HTML Editor. There are **7 Layouts** to choose from, and each layout is available in **13 colors**. Furthermore, instructors can add both **Static** (<https://vtac.lonestar.edu/help/html-templates-static-elements>) (12 Types) and **Dynamic** (<https://vtac.lonestar.edu/help/html-templates-dynamic-elements>) (2 Types) elements to them to increase student attention and engagement with your content.

**When Should I Use HTML Templates?** Reasons include but are not limited to the following:

1. To save time when creating course content files from scratch. Especially if you need a solid starting point. HTML Templates provide layouts (templates) for **Course Introduction**, **Module Introduction**, **Instructor Introduction**, and more.
2. If you plan to create several course content files in your course(s), using HTML templates ensures visual consistency and uniformity across all your course files.
3. If you want to use any of the HTML Template static or dynamic elements in your course content files or in any HTML field. Elements copied from **Additional Elements** (<https://vtac.lonestar.edu/help/additional-elements>) can be pasted in any HTML field in your D2L course (Ex: Module descriptions).

## Creator+

**Creator+** consists of 3 features which are designed to help instructors easily create engaging, interactive accessible content in minutes, with no training, within their HTML course content pages. The three features that comprise Creator+ are: **Insert Elements**, **Insert Practice**, and **Layouts**.

- **Insert Elements** (<https://vtac.lonestar.edu/help/creator-insert-element>) can be used to deliver notable,

visual, related, or sequenced information in an appealing and interactive way within HTML course content files. Creator+ offers **6 Dynamic Elements** and **3 Static Elements**.

- **Insert Practice** (<https://vtac.lonestar.edu/help/creator-insert-practice>) allows instructors to create practice questions within HTML course content files enabling students to immediately check their answers and receive instant feedback outside of a formal graded assessment. Creator+ offers **7 types of Practice Questions**.
- **Layouts** (<https://vtac.lonestar.edu/help/creator-layouts>) allow instructors to easily arrange the content within their HTML course content files into multi panel layouts for a more organized and dynamic look. Creator+ offers **4 Layouts**.

**When Should I Use Creator+?** Reasons include but are not limited to the following:

1. To add interactive components to your course content files. Especially if you have a lot of visual content in the form of images.
2. To add practice questions to your course content files.
3. To help structure course content files with a lot of content.

## SoftChalk

**SoftChalk** (<https://vtac.lonestar.edu/help/getting-started-with-softchalk>) is an advanced third-party authoring tool which allows instructors to create highly interactive learning materials in the form of multi-page online lessons. Instructors must create their lessons within the SoftChalk platform before [adding them to their D2L course\(s\)](https://vtac.lonestar.edu/help/softchalk-in-d2l) (<https://vtac.lonestar.edu/help/softchalk-in-d2l>). Instructors can add various features to their SoftChalk lessons, such as: quizzes, games, annotations, static and dynamic elements, and much more.

**When Should I Use SoftChalk?** Reasons include but are not limited to the following:

1. When you wish to create elaborate interactive lessons and you require maximum customization features and tools.
2. When you wish to sync your interactive activities to your course gradebook.
3. When you want to create a lesson that can be migrated to another LMS if needed.

## Comparison Charts

To further help you decide which tool best suits your needs, please reference the charts below for a side-by-side comparison between **HTML Templates**, **Creator+**, and **SoftChalk**.

### Overall Features

The chart below compares the overall abilities and features all three tools offer.

	HTML Templates (Built into D2L)	Creator+ (Built into D2L)	SoftChalk (Third-Party Integration)
Assessment Tools	✗	✓	✓
Coding Required	✗	✗	✗
Color Variation	✓	✗	✓
Templates or Example Activities Available	✓	✗	✓
Customization Features	✓	Offers the least customization	Offers the most customization
Dynamic Elements	✓	✓	✓
Easy Course Copy	✓	✓	✓
Fully Accessible	✓	✓	✓
Mobile Friendly	✓	✓	✓
Quiz Questions	✗	✓	✓
Static Elements	✓	✓	✓
Syncs to the Gradebook	✗	✗	✓

## Elements and Activities

The chart below compares some of the static elements, dynamic elements, and activities all three tools offer. **Yellow** cells indicate activities that can be scored and graded.

	HTML Templates (Built into D2L)	Creator+ (Built into D2L)	SoftChalk (Third-Party Integration)
Accordion	✓	✓	✓
Block / Style Quote	✓	✓	✓
Callout	✓	✓	✓
Carousel / Slideshow	✗	✓	✓

	HTML Templates (Built into D2L)	Creator+ (Built into D2L)	SoftChalk (Third-Party Integration)
Click and Reveal	✗	✓	✗
Connections	✗	✗	✓
Crossword Puzzle	✗	✗	✓
Drag & Drop / Sorting	✗	✓	✓
Flip / Flash Card	✗	✓	✓
Hotspot	✗	✓	✓
Image Map	✗	✗	✓
Labeling	✗	✗	✓
Memory	✗	✗	✓
Ordering / Sequence	✗	✓	✓
Pairs	✗	✗	✓
Tabs	✓	✓	✓
Timeline	✗	✓	✓
Word Search	✗	✗	✓

## Question Types

The chart below compares the question types **Creator+** and **SoftChalk** offer. HTML Templates is not included as it does not offer any question types. Creator+ offers practice questions which can be scored but cannot be synced to the gradebook. Conversely, all SoftChalk questions can be scored and graded.

	Creator+ (Built into D2L)	SoftChalk (Third-Party Integration)
Drop Down Fill in the Blanks	✓	✓
Essay	✗	✓
Feedback	✗	✓
Fill in the Blanks	✓	✓
Matching / Sorting	✓	✓

	<b>Creator+</b> <b>(Built into D2L)</b>	<b>SoftChalk</b> <b>(Third-Party Integration)</b>
<b>Multiple Choice</b>	✓	✓
<b>Multi Select</b>	✓	✓
<b>Ordering / Sequence</b>	✓	✓
<b>Short Answer</b>	✗	✓
<b>True or False</b>	✓	✓