Discussions

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Introduction to Discussions
The discussion tool allows you to create forums and topics. A forum is a heading and a topic is the link the students click on for a discussion. The discussion tool also allows you to restrict discussion topics to specific groups of students.

Discussion Foundations
The discussion area is the primary mode of communication during the class. It is through discussion topics that the instructor creates a forum for "class discussion" that should cover and review previously required reading assignments. Students can also communicate with one another and with the instructor through this venue. The best practice is to have all discussion topics for a course created prior to the start of the session.

Discussion Leader Roles
There are five possible roles for the instructor as discussion leader. The best instructors assume all roles at some point during an eight week session, and often instructors assume all roles in one discussion topic.

Community Leader – creates a friendly environment, cheers strong contributions and nudges reluctant contributors.

Discussion Leader – poses questions, moves toward ever higher thinking skills, encourages students to question each other and provides mini-summaries.

Manager – enforces rules and guidelines, provides meaningful and frequent feedback, monitors student involvement and keeps the workspace "clutter" free.

Technical Consultant – coaches on how to use computer software, establishes a frequently-asked-question file, and connects students with appropriate help desks.

Information Resource – joins the conversation as a substantive participant, refers students to key resources and often posts new material at the site.
Create a Forum
At least one forum must be created to use Discussions. A forum is a like a folder, and it appears to the student like a heading. It is used to categorize your discussion topics. If you have one discussion topic for each week, you would need only one forum, with a topic for each week under the general course forum. If you have multiple discussion topics each week, you will need a forum for each week with topics under the weekly forums. Students cannot see a forum if there are no topics associated with it.


![New Forum](image)

2. Enter a Title and Description.

![New Forum Details](image)

3. If desired, check the box to automatically create a new topic in the forum with the same title.

![New Forum Details](image)

4. Click Save.
Create a Topic

1. Click **New** and select **New Topic** on the Discussions page, or click **Add Topic** from the context menu of the forum in which you want to create the topic.

2. Use the drop-down menu to select the Forum where the topic should be listed.

3. Enter a **Title** for the topic and a **Description** (optional).
4. In the Options section, check the following boxes as desired

- **Allow anonymous posts**: allow users to post to the topic anonymously. (This is not recommended)
- **A moderator must approve individual posts before they display in the topic**: approve each message before it is posted.
- **Users must start a thread before they can read and reply to other threads**: enforce students to post a new message before they are given access to read and reply to other messages

5. Set availability, locking options, and restrictions as explained in later sections of this documentation.

6. Click **Save and Close**.
Availability/Hide Forums and Topics

1. On the Discussions page, click Edit from the context menu of the forum or topic you want to hide.

2. If the options in the Availability section are not visible, click Show forum visibility options or Show topic visibility options.
3. Select the option you want for availability:

- Always visible
- Hide (will hide topic or forum from students until you select always visible again)
- Visible for a specified date range

4. If you chose **Forum is visible for a specified date range**, check the **Has Start Date** and/or **Has End Date** and enter the date and times.

5. Click **Save and Close**.
Lock Forums and Topics
You may choose to lock forums or topics to prevent students from posting new messages while still allowing them to view previous discussion. When a forum or topic is locked, it becomes read-only.

1. On the Discussions page, click **Edit Forum** from the context menu of the forum or topic you want to lock.

2. If the options in the **Locking Options** section are not visible, click **Show locking options**.
3. Select the option you want:

- Unlock – stays unlocked until you lock it
- Lock – stays locked until you unlock it
- Unlock for a specified date range – automatically locks and unlocks the topic

4. If you chose **Unlock forum for a specified date range**, check the Has Start Date and/or Has End Date and enter the dates and times.

5. Click **Save and Close**.
Set Release Conditions

1. On the Discussions page, click **Edit Forum** from the context menu of the form or topic you want to add release conditions to.

![Edit Forum screenshot](image1)

2. Click the **Restrictions** tab.

![Restrictions tab screenshot](image2)

3. If you do not see the Release Conditions section, click **Show Forum Release Conditions** or **Show Topic Release Conditions**.

![Release Conditions screenshot](image3)
4. Add Additional Release Conditions by clicking **Attach Existing** or **Create and Attach** (optional, please see documentation on Conditional Release for more information).

5. To remove release conditions, click **Remove** next to each condition you want to remove.

6. Click **Save and Close**.
**Group Restrictions**

Groups must first be created in the Classlist to use this function. See the documentation on Groups for more information on how to create them.

1. On the Discussions page, click **Edit Forum** from the context menu of the form or topic you want to add release conditions to.

2. Click the **Restrictions** tab.

3. If you do not see the Group Restrictions section, click **Show Forum Group and Section Restrictions** or **Show Topic Group and Section Restrictions**.
4. Select **Restrict this forum to the following groups and sections** or **Restrict this topic to the following groups and sections**.

5. Click **Add Groups and Sections**.

6. Select a **Group or Section Category**.
7. Select the groups or sections.

8. Click **Add**.

9. Click **Save and Close**.
Edit a Forum or Topic

1. On the Discussions page, click **Edit Forum** from the context menu of the form or topic you want to add release conditions to.

![Edit Forum Menu](image1)

2. Select the tab containing the information you want to edit.

![Edit Forum Details](image2)

3. Make the necessary edits.

4. Click **Save and Close**.
Delete a Forum or Topic

1. From the context menu next to a forum or topic, select **Delete**.

   **Warning:** Deleting a forum deletes all topics associated with it. Deleting a topic deletes all messages associated with it.

2. Click **Yes** in the confirmation window.
Order Forums and Topics

1. Click **More Actions** and select **Reorder** on the Discussions page.

2. Use the drop-down lists to select the order.

3. Click **Save**.
Start a New Thread in a Topic

1. Click a topic title link on the main discussions page.

2. Click **Start a New Thread**.

3. Enter a subject and message.
4. (Optional) To pin your message to the top of the topic, select the **Pin thread** checkbox.

5. (Optional) If you want to attach a file or audio recording:
   a. Click **Add attachments**.
   b. To attach a file, click **Upload** and browse to the location where the file is saved or drag and drop the file from your computer to the Attachments upload target.
   c. To attach an audio recording, click **Record Audio**.

Ensure your microphone is set up correctly. Click **Flash Settings** to make adjustments to your microphone selection and volume. When ready, click **Record**. When finished, click **Record** again to stop recording. Click **Play** to listen to your recording. Click **Clear** to erase your recording and start again. Click **Save** to attach the recording.
6. (Optional) Instructors have the ability to post messages in multiple topics within a course. If you would like to post your message to more than one topic:

   a. Click **Post to other topics**.

   ![Post to other topics](image)

   b. Click **Add Topics**.

   ![Add Topics](image)

   c. Check the box next to the topic(s) you want your message posted and click **Add Topics**.

   ![Add Topics](image)

7. Click **Post** to post the message now, or click **Save as Draft** to save the message without posting.

![Post](image)
Reply to a Thread

1. Click a topic title link on the main discussions page.

2. Click on the name of the thread you want to reply to.

3. Click **Reply to Thread** or click ⬅️ Reply to reply to a particular post inside the thread.

4. Enter your reply and click **Post**.
Draft Thread

When starting a new thread, you can save the thread as a draft to continue working on it later. You can only save new threads as drafts. You cannot save a draft when replying to another message.

1. To save a draft, click **Save as Draft** when composing a new message.

2. To open a draft message:
   a. Click on the topic where you created the message.
   b. From the **Filter by** context menu, select **Drafts**.
   c. Click the message title and continue creating the thread. When you are ready to post it, click **Publish**.
View Statistics

1. On the Discussions page, select View Forum Statistics or View Topic Statistics from the context menu of the form or topic.

2. 

3. To view statistics for the entire course, click Statistics at the top of the Discussions page.
**Personal Settings**

1. Click **Settings** on the main Discussions page.

2. Scroll down to Personal settings and set them as desired. You can click on the question mark to see what each one does.

3. Click **Save**.
Configure a Topic for Assessment

1. Select **Edit Topic** from the context menu of the topic you want to configure.

2. Click the **Assessment** tab.

3. Use the **Grade Item** drop-down to select the grade item you want to link the topic to or click the **New Grade Item** link to create and add a new item.

4. In the **Score Out Of** box, enter the total number of points the discussion item is worth.

5. Click **Save**.
Grading Discussions

From the Assess Topic page, you can click on students to see all their posts for that specific discussion thread. You can also click Assess Student from within a thread to grade posts from a specific student.

1. On the Discussions page, do one of the following:

   - Select Assess Topic from the context menu of the topic you want to assess. Click the Topic Score link beneath the name of the user you want to assess.

   - Click on the name of the discussion topic, and choose a thread. Select Assess Student from the context menu next to the student’s post you want to assess.
2. Enter the number of points earned in the **Topic Score** box.

![Image of Topic Score box]

3. Enter **Feedback**.

![Image of General Feedback]

4. If you want to release the grade to the student, click the **Publish** button. If you want to save the grade as a draft, click the **Save Draft** button. (You can wait until all discussions are graded and click the **Publish All Scores** button on the Assess Topic page).

![Image of Publish and Save Draft]

5. Click **Save and Close**.
Subscribe to a Forum, Topic, or Thread
You can subscribe to discussion forums, topics, or thread to receive email notifications that you want to follow. You will be emailed when a new message has been posted to a forum, topic, or thread that you have subscribed to.

1. Click **Subscribe** from the context menu of the forum or topic to receive notifications. (Click **Unsubscribe** to stop receiving notifications).

2. Click ✭ **Subscribe** beside the thread you want to receive notifications for.

3. Use the **Notification Frequency** drop-down menu to select whether you would like to receive the notification in your summary of activity or if you would like an instant notification.

4. Click **Subscribe** to start receiving notifications.