Discussion Forums in Moodle

By default, each course in Moodle has a News forum; additional forums can be added to a course site to promote and help facilitate interactive discussions between students, and with the instructor.

Types of forums
A News forum is automatically created for each course and is a place for general course announcements and news. There are four different types of discussion forums an instructor can choose from:

- **A single simple discussion** – A single topic discussion developed on one page.
  - **Note**: group mode cannot be used with this type.

- **Each person posts one discussion** – Each person can post only one new discussion topic; however, students are not limited in the replies they can make on one another’s discussions.

- **Q and A forum** – Instead of initiating discussions, the instructor poses a question to the class. Students may reply with an answer, but cannot see the replies of other students until they have posted their own response to the question.
  - **Note**: In order for this forum type to properly function, the instructor must go into the forum after creating it and then click on “Add a new question” to pose the question for their students to answer.

  When students answer the question they should click reply in the thread where the instructor has posed the question. They should not answer the question by clicking “Add a new question.”

- **Standard forum displayed in a blog-like format** – An open forum where anyone can start a new discussion at any time, and in which discussion topics are displayed on one page with ”Discuss this topic” links.

- **Standard forum for general use** – An open forum where anyone can start a new discussion topic at any time and any student can reply to any posting.

**Important Note**: A forum’s type cannot be modified after it has been created and students have posted to the forum. It is important to select the proper format type forum for an online discussion before you create a forum.

Creating a Forum

1. Click **Turn editing on**.

2. Go to the desired module, click on the **Add an activity** drop-down menu, and select **Forum**.

3. Provide a name for the discussion forum and specify the type of the forum.

4. Type a description for the forum, which provides participants with a discussion prompt and instructions on the use of the forum.

5. Scroll down and click **Save and return to course** to create the forum.
Additional Forum Creation Settings

**Display description on course page:** If checked, this option will show the description of the forum on your Moodle course page.

**Subscription mode:** When one is subscribed to the discussion forum, it means the participant will receive email copies of forum posts. There are four types of subscriptions:

- **Optional subscription** - Participants can choose whether to be subscribed. (Default and preferred.)
- **Forced subscription** - Everyone is subscribed and cannot unsubscribe. This option can create a large volume of emails and is not recommended.
- **Auto subscription** - Everyone is subscribed initially but can choose to unsubscribe at any time.
- **Subscription disabled** - Subscriptions are not allowed.

**NOTE:** It is suggested to avoid the use of forced subscriptions because of the amount of email messages this will send to participants.

**Read tracking for this forum?** This option will highlight which forum postings have been read and which remain unread.

**Maximum attachment size:** This option specifies the largest size of file that can be attached to a forum post.

**Maximum number of attachments:** This setting specifies the maximum number of files that can be attached to a forum post.

**Thresholds:** This option allows an instructor to establish a maximum number of postings per student in a given time period within a discussion forum. Once the number has been reached, a warning will be displayed that will inform the student that they may not post to the forum. Setting the warning threshold to 0 will disable the warning to students. Setting the blocking threshold to 0 will allow students to post as many times as they want.

**Grade category:** This setting controls the category in which this activity's grades are placed in the gradebook.

**Ratings:** Posts may be given a rating or a number grade. Only teachers and non-editing teachers may give ratings to forum posts. *(Grading discussions is elaborated on the “Grading Discussion Forums” section)*

**Group mode:** Allows an instructor to create groups and restrict group members to be assigned to specific discussion forum areas. *(For more information please see the Collaborative Activities tutorial.)*

**Note:** Single Simple discussion forums cannot be used in group mode.

**Visible:** Allows an instructor to Show (make available) or Hide (keep hidden) a newly created forum.
Engaging in Discussion Forums

Posting a new topic

1. To access the discussion forums, click on \textit{Forums} under the \textbf{Activities} block.

2. Click on the discussion forum you would like to contribute to and click on \textit{Add a new discussion topic}. If you are adding to a Single Simple Discussion Forum, simply click \textit{Reply}.

3. Fill in the topic subject and content (add an attachment, if you wish), and then click \textit{Post to forum}.

Reading a message

1. To access the discussion forums, click on \textit{Forums} under the \textbf{Activities} block.

2. Click onto the specific discussion forum that you created that you would like to read content from.

3. If it is not a single simple discussion forum, click on the topic you wish to view.

4. Then you will see all the replies that students have made.

Posting a response to a message

1. Choose the message you wish to respond to and click \textit{Reply}. Then type your response in the message text box.

2. Then scroll down and click \textit{Post to forum}.

\textbf{Note}: Only Instructors have the \textit{Edit | Delete} options for each reply that is made.
### Grading Discussion Forums

In Moodle, **Discussion Forums** are gradable similarly to assignments. When creating a Discussion Forum that will be graded, check **Allow posts to be rated** during its creation. Use the Grade drop-down menu to select the grading scale you wish to use.

**Note:** If you are using a **weighted gradebook**, graded activities will only be weighted equally if the Grade drop-down is the same for all activities contained within that category. That is, the number of possible points per assignment should be equal for every activity in the category.

1. Click on the **Forums** under the **Activities** block.

2. Select the forum that will be graded in the forums list.

3. Next, in the **Ratings** drop down menu located in the post to be graded, select the grade the student will receive.

**Note:** Due to the manner in which Moodle averages forum ratings, we highly suggest that you only rate one post per student per forum. This means grading a student only once for each forum when forum posting has ceased. A student's total forum grade should be assigned to either their first or last forum posting.

4. After you are done grading posts scroll to the bottom of the forum and click on **Send in my latest ratings**.

**Note:** Only instructors can grade forum posts. Students will not be able to grade other students' posts, and they will only be able to see their own ratings.
Managing Resources and Activities

**Renaming an item: The pencil**
1. Click the Turn Editing On button. 
2. Click on the Edit Title icon next to the resource you want to rename. 
3. Enter the updated name of the resource and press Enter to save. Press ESC to cancel.

**Indenting an item: The arrow**
1. Click the Turn Editing On button. 
2. Select the Move Right icon to indent the item. 
3. To indent the item further, select the right arrow again. To move the item back, select the left arrow.

**Moving an item: The four-way arrow**
1. Click the Turn Editing On button. 
2. Left click and hold the item’s four-way arrow. 
3. Drag the item to its desired location, noting the preview that appears which marks where the item will be placed.
4. Release the left mouse button.

Note: If you see two vertical hooks (-vertical arrow) they will achieve the same thing as the four way arrow only in a different way. To move an item with the two vertical hooks click on the item’s hooks and then click in the appropriate position for it to be moved.

**Editing an item: The gear (cog)**
1. Click the Turn Editing On button. 
2. Select the Update icon for the item you wish to edit. 
3. The following page displays the original page that you used to create the item. Here you can edit the name, description, due dates, grading method, etc.

**Duplicating an item: The papers**
1. Click the Turn Editing On button. 
2. Select the Duplicate icon to make a copy of the item. 
3. Click Continue to confirm that you would like to duplicate the item. 
4. The page will indicate that the item has been successfully duplicated. To make changes to the copy, select Edit the new copy. To keep the duplicated item as is, select Save and Return to the course.
Deleting an item: The X

1. Click the Turn Editing On button.  
2. Select the X icon to delete the item.  
3. Click OK on the pop-up window to confirm that you would like to delete the item.

Making an item visible or invisible: The eye

1. Click the Turn Editing On button.  
2. Select the Hide icon to close the eye image and make the item invisible to the students.  
3. To make the item available to the students, select the eye icon again to Show.

*Note: When the item is invisible, the name will appear in light gray rather than black.*