Discussion Board

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Discussion Board

Online discussions provide some unique benefits. Because students can take time to ponder before posting ideas, you may see more thoughtful conversations play out. You can observe as students demonstrate their grasp of the material and correct misconceptions. You can extend your office hours by reaching students more often during the week so learning is continuous.

Building a sense of community among students is crucial for a successful online experience. With the discussion board tool, course members can replicate the robust discussions that take place in the traditional classroom. Discussions can serve a range of purposes, such as:

- An online meeting place for social interaction among peers.
- An additional medium for collaboration and the exchange of ideas.
- A medium to pose questions about homework assignments, readings, and course content.
- A way to demonstrate the understanding or application of course material.
- A record of discussion that members can review at a later point.
- A graded activity that demonstrates understanding or application of course material.

Flexible and Reflective Communication

After you determine what you need, you can create asynchronous interactions occurring over extended periods of time. This allows for more flexibility, as well as reflective communication.

Asynchronous communication offers convenience and flexibility to all participants. Some benefits include:

- Participants do not need to be in the same location or time zone.
- Participants can carefully consider and reflect on the initial message before responding. Hopefully, more thoughtful conversations can occur.

- You can accommodate different learning styles. For example, students who are shy about speaking in class may feel more comfortable responding to discussion threads.

For smaller course groups, you can also offer the group discussion board tool, available only to the members of the group. To learn more, see How to Enable Group Discussions.

Note: Your institution controls whether this tool is available.

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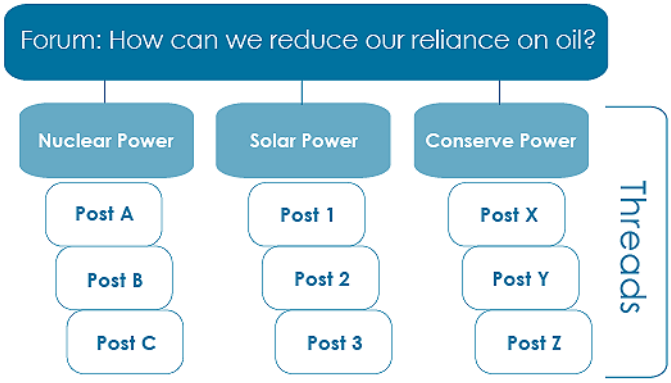
About Forums and Threads

Just as it is critical to plan and structure your course content, you need to provide structure for online discussions.

The main discussion board page displays a list of forums. A ***forum*** is an area where participants discuss a topic or a group of related topics. Within each forum, participants can create multiple threads. A ***thread*** includes the initial post and all replies to it.

The discussions are logged and displayed sequentially so all course members can follow the conversation.



Watch a Tutorial

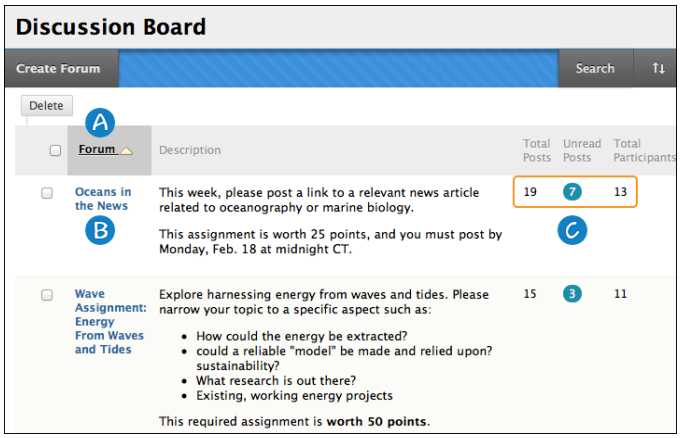
Double-click the video to enlarge the viewing area.

About the Discussion Board Page

The discussion board is commonly accessed from the course menu, although you can provide a link to it in another course area, such as in a content area.

The **Discussion Board** page contains a list of all the forums you have created for your course. You must first create one or more forums before message threads can be started.

On the action bar, create forums and use the search function to search for discussion board content. By default, the search field appears collapsed to save screen space.

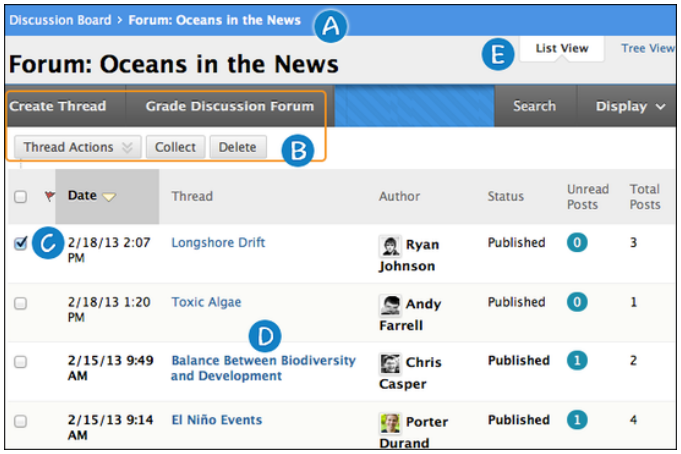


1. To sort a column, click the column heading. For example, if you sort the **Forum** column, the items appear in alphabetical or reverse alphabetical order.
2. To view the posts, click the forum title. Forum titles in bold type contain unread posts.
3. For each forum, view the total number of posts, the number of unread posts, and the number of users who have participated in the forum. For one-click access to the forum's unread messages, click the link in the **Unread Posts** column.

About a Discussion Forum

When you access a forum, a list of threads appears. The columns display information for each thread, such as date created, author, and status.

To sort a column, click the column heading or caret.

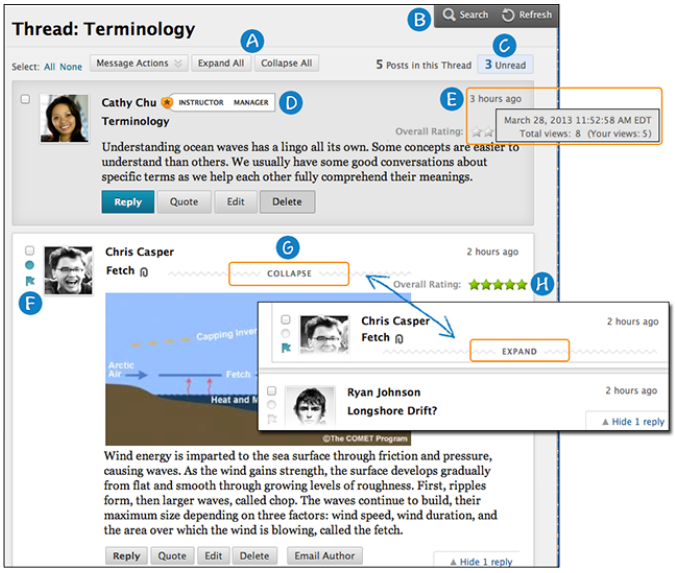


1. When possible, use the orientation bar to navigate to a previous page. Do not use the browser navigation controls because page load errors may occur.
2. Use the action bar functions to perform various actions, such as creating threads, grading forum contributions, collecting threads, and searching content.
3. Select multiple threads' check boxes or select the check box in the header row to select all threads for an action, such as deleting.
4. Click a thread title to read the posts. Titles containing unread posts appear in bold type.
5. Determine your view. You can view a forum with threads appearing in a list -OR- in a tree view with all posts listed below each thread title. To learn more, see List View and Tree View.

About a Discussion Thread

When you view the thread page, all posts and the thread description appear on one page. Thread descriptions are often used as prompts for discussion, so they are now visible where users are posting. Large images of course members help you easily identify authors.

To help make replying easy, the content editor appears immediately below the message you are replying to. You are not taken to a new page to post a reply, allowing you to refer to any post on the page.



1. Use **Expand All** and **Collapse All** to manage the visibility of posts on the page.
2. Functions appear when you point to the page. Move your mouse pointer anywhere on the page and action bar functions appear at the top, such as **Search** and **Refresh**.
3. Click the number of unread posts to view a page containing only the unread posts in a thread.
4. When viewing threads, a badge appears next to a forum manager or moderator's name. Point to the badge to see the user's course role and forum role. If your institution has custom roles, they are displayed. Role highlighting is available only in the discussion board.
5. The dates for posts appear as relative dates such as "7 days ago." When you point to the relative date, you can view the absolute date of creation or editing and the number of views.
6. New **Mark as Read** indicator: Blue icon = ***unread***. White icon = ***read***. Posts are marked as read as you scroll down the page, after a slight delay. Only expanded posts that you view onscreen are marked as read. Posts are not automatically marked read by quickly scrolling down the page. Click the icon to manually change the status of a message. You can also flag posts you want to review again later or indicate as important.
7. When you point to a post, **Reply**, **Quote**, **Expand/Collapse**, and other available functions appear. Click **Collapse** to fold up a post. This increases the vertical screen space available for viewing posts.
8. If you enabled the rate posts feature in a forum's settings, **Overall Rating** shows the average rating for a post. When you point to the rating area, it changes to show **Your Rating**.

Set Up Discussions

The most common form of interaction in an online course is through the discussion board using forums established by an instructor. Participation and interaction in the discussion board does not occur naturally, but must be intentionally designed into your courses. To encourage engaging, quality discussion, craft discussion questions carefully and create inquiry.

If you want to encourage participation, consider allowing students to post anonymously. Also, allow students to create new threads. This flexibility may encourage members to post their ideas and questions. You can also provide incentive by grading the discussion or adding exam questions based on discussion content.

Develop Successful Online Discussions

You can help your students feel comfortable and provide them with guidelines as they begin to use the discussion board.

The following list describes four steps for developing successful online discussions to help build community and fulfill assignments.

- ***Define participation requirements***

  Students need to be aware of your expectations. Create a forum where students can read about etiquette and access grading information. Model proper online interaction and reinforce appropriate behavior with public recognition.

- ***Craft an effective question***

  Incorporate multimedia resources into your questions to reduce the monotony of purely text based interactions. With the popularity of services like YouTube™, you can ask students to view a clip and ask for responses. Use the mashups feature to include images, videos, and slide presentations to your questions. Students can also add mashups to their replies.

- ***Encourage new ideas***

  If discussion posts contain too much agreement and not enough questioning of ideas, try assigning students with the last names A–M to support one side and N–Z to support the other.

- ***Moderate***

  Establish your presence by asking for clarification, resources, or input from silent participants.

Suggestions for Forum Settings

Forum settings allow you to use the discussion board in different ways. For example, to fully control a forum, you create all threads, moderate, and grade the posts. For a student-led discussion, allow students to create new threads with the option of posting anonymously.

The following table includes some of the ways you can control the behavior of forums in a discussion board.

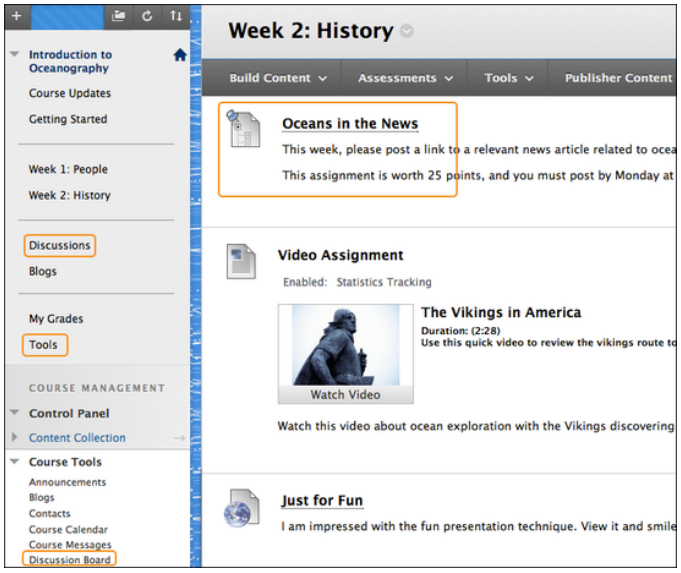
Goal	Forum Setting
Promote originality and a variety of ideas	You can create "post first" forums where you ask students to respond before they can read and reply to their classmates' posts.
Create effective social forums	Allow students to post anonymously and without worrying about receiving a grade. Allowing students to post anonymously is important at the beginning of a course when they are still becoming comfortable with discussions.
Monitor quality and behavior	Assign a moderator to review each post before making it public. To learn more, see Moderate Discussions.
Allow students to control the discussion	Allow students to edit, delete, and rate posts. To learn more about ratings, see How to Rate Posts. Also, you can allow students to create new threads and direct the discussion.
Have a tightly controlled forum and use it to evaluate student performance	Select the grading and moderating options. To be sure students focus on the existing threads, do not allow the creation of new threads.
Allow authors to edit their published posts	Consider locking the thread after grading. Users cannot change locked posts. To learn more, see How to Change a Thread's Status.

You cannot select some settings in combination. For example, if you are grading forums or threads, anonymous posts are not allowed. Also, if you enable thread grading, members cannot create new threads.

Access the Discussion Board

You can allow users to access the discussion board in several ways. You can add a customized link to the course menu and to a course area. When you provide a link to the discussion board in a course area, students can access the tool alongside other course content. To learn more, see How to Add a Link to the Discussion Board in a Course Area.

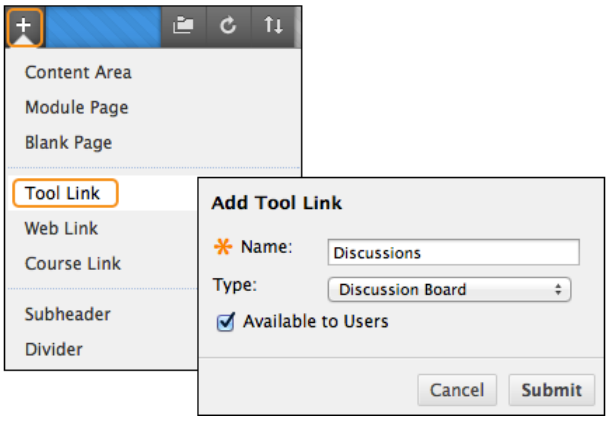
As an instructor, on the **Control Panel**, expand the **Course Tools** section and select **Discussion Board**. From this link, access the course discussion board and the group discussion boards for the groups in your course.



How to Add a Discussion Link on the Course Menu

If you want students to access the discussion board often, you can include a link on the course menu for one-click access to the tool. You can also customize the name of the link.

1. Change **Edit Mode** to **ON** and point to the plus sign above the course menu. The **Add Menu Item** drop-down list appears.
2. Select **Tool Link**.
3. Type a **Name** for the link.
4. From the **Type** drop-down list, select **Discussion Board**.
5. Select the **Available to Users** check box.
6. Click **Submit**.



The new tool link appears last in the course menu list. Press and drag the arrows icon to move the link into a new position. Access the link's contextual menu to rename, delete, or hide the link from students.

How to Add a Discussion Link in a Course Area

You can incorporate the discussion board into course areas, allowing students to access the tool alongside content. For example, you can add links to the discussion board itself or specific discussion forums to any content area, learning module, lesson plan, or folder.

In a content area, you can add a forum link following lecture notes to gather questions on the material presented or after an assignment to gather students' perceptions on how they did. You can add adaptive release rules or date availability restrictions to limit students' access. This allows them to access content in a specified order, such as reading a PDF before adding posts to the discussion board. To learn about adaptive release, see Controlling the Release of Content.

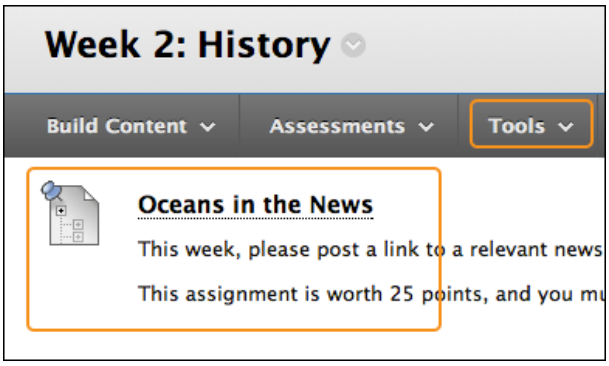
1. Access the content area, learning module, lesson plan, or folder where you want to link to the discussion board or forum. Change **Edit Mode** to **ON**.
2. On the action bar, point to **Tools** to access the drop-down list.
3. Select **Discussion Board**.
4. On the **Create Link: Discussion Board** page, select the **Link to Discussion Board Page** option to link to the discussion board itself.

   -OR-

   Select the **Select a Discussion Board Forum** option and select a forum from the list.

   -OR-

   Click **Create New Forum** to add a link to a forum you create at this time. You select all forum settings at the time of creation. The newly created forum appears in the list of forums to choose from when adding the link in your course.
5. Click **Next**.
6. On the next **Create Link: Discussion Board** page, type a **Link Name**. The **Link Name** cannot exceed 50 characters. Students click the name to access the discussion board or forum.
7. Optionally, type instructions or a description in the **Text** box. You can use the content editor functions to format the text and include files, images, web links, multimedia, and mashups. Files uploaded from your computer are saved in Course Files or the Content Collection in the top-level folder.
8. For the **Available** option, select **Yes** to make the link available to users.
9. For the **Track Number of Views** option, select **Yes** or **No**. If you enable tracking, the number of times the link is viewed, when it is viewed, and by whom is recorded.
10. For **Date Restrictions**, you can set the link to display on a specific date and time and to stop displaying on a specific date and time. Select the **Display After** and **Display Until** check boxes to enable the date and time selections. Type dates and times in the boxes or use the pop-**up Date Selection Calendar** and **Time Selection Menu** to select dates and times. Display restrictions do not affect the availability of the discussion board or forum content, only when it appears.
11. Click **Submit**. The discussion link appears in the course area.

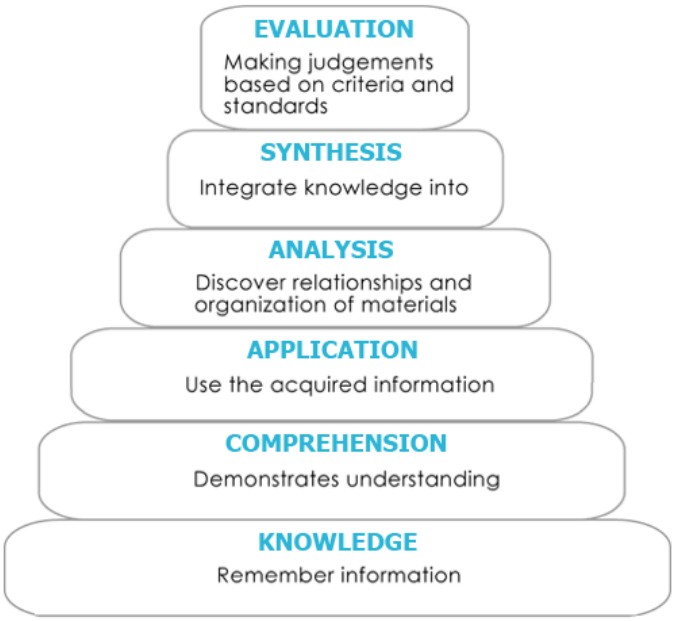

Week 2: History
Build Content
Assessments
Tools
Oceans in the News
This week, please post a link to a relevant news
This assignment is worth 25 points, and you mu

Best Practice: Effective Questions

The quality of the first post in a thread influences the thought level of subsequent postings. A carefully worded discussion question is perhaps the most important factor in using discussions to satisfy your learning objectives.

Using Bloom's Taxonomy

You can use Bloom's Taxonomy to determine what type of question to develop, as well as how to word it. In this classification system, the least complex level, information recall, resides at the bottom of the pyramid as a knowledge base. At the top, evaluation, synthesis, and analysis require the most complex and abstract thinking. Discussions, along with creative assignments and group work, are for higher order thinking.



Essential and Guiding Questions

Essential and guiding questions may also draw out higher order thinking.

- Essential questions require skills, such as analyzing, synthesizing, or evaluating. Answers to essential questions cannot be readily found on the internet and copied; they must have personal meaning and insight constructed by the student.
- Guiding questions help students answer the essential question. These questions are subcategories of the main topic and may tap into lower levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Ideas for Guiding Questions

You can develop guiding questions and use them in a number of ways:

- Students can work in small groups to develop their own guiding questions to help them answer the essential question.
- You can start with guiding questions and lead up to the essential question through the course of the discussion.
- You can include them with the initial post to help students get started.
- You can interject guiding questions when a lull occurs.

Example: ***Essential Question***

How would you design the perfect online instructor?

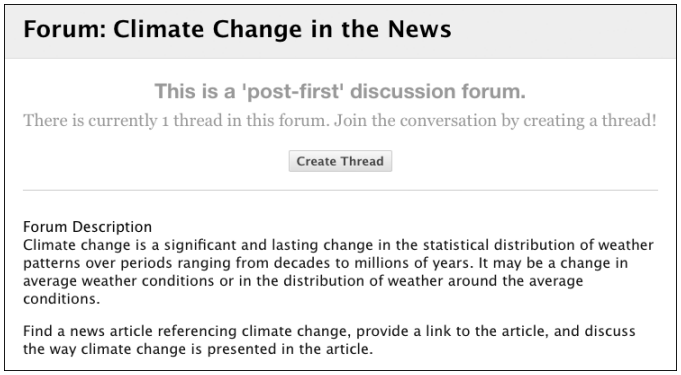
Example: ***Guiding Questions***

- What assumptions do you hold about teaching effectiveness?
- How would you assess an instructor's performance?
- Identify a list of traits that describe the qualification of perfect. Think about your own experiences as a student.
- List traits you would avoid in designing the perfect instructor.

Create Forums

A discussion board forum is an area where participants discuss a topic or a group of related topics. Within each forum, users can create multiple threads. A thread includes the initial post and all replies to it. You can create forums and threads to organize discussions into units or topics relevant to your course. To distinguish between forums and threads, see About Forums and Threads.

Forum settings allow you to use the discussion board in different ways. For example, to control a forum, an instructor creates all threads, moderates, and grades the posts. For a student-led discussion, you can allow students to create new threads with the option of posting anonymously. You can also create "post first" forums where you ask students to respond before they can read their classmates' posts.

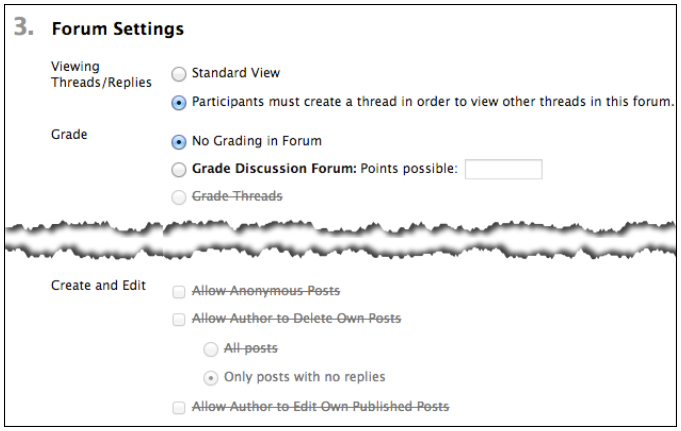


The Create Forum Page

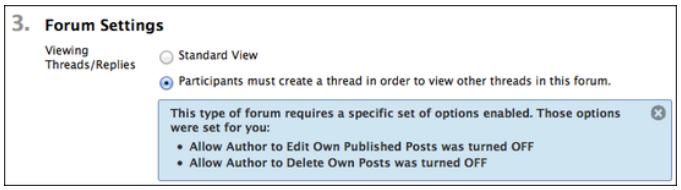
The forum description you provide appears when users create a thread and when they encounter a thread with the post first setting. Forum descriptions are often used as prompts for discussion and are visible where users are posting.

You can choose between **Standard View**, the default, and **Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum**, which is the post first setting.

Forum settings are grouped into related areas on the page, making it easier to scan and select options. Settings that are not available based on the current selections are grayed-out or have strike-through text.



For example, when you apply the post first setting, various settings are automatically set and made unavailable for change to maintain the integrity of the post first capability. An author is not allowed to delete his own posts to avoid a student posting something first to see others' posts, and then editing their post after the fact.

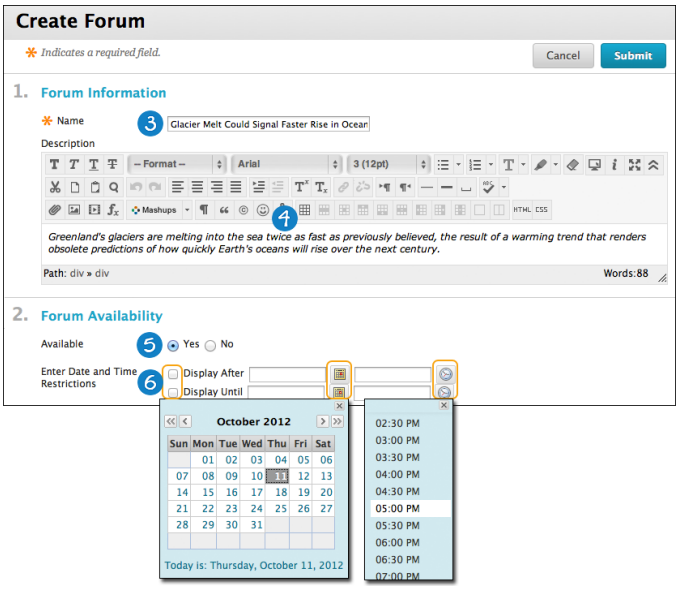


How to Create Forums

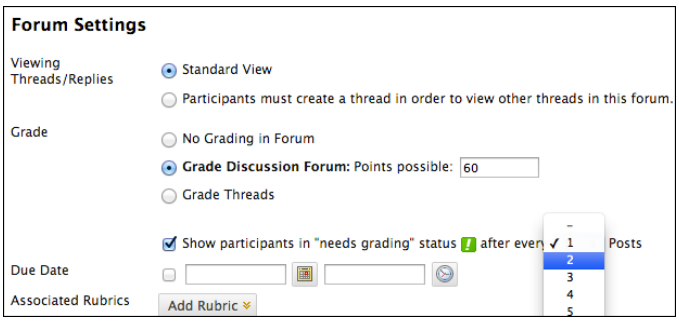
1. Access the discussion board.
2. On the **Discussion Board** page, click **Create Forum** on the action bar.
3. On the **Create Forum** page, type a **Name**. Provide a descriptive and unique name because users click this name to access the forum.
4. Optionally, type instructions or a description in the **Description** box. You can use the content editor functions to format the text and include files, images, web links, multimedia, and mashups. Any files you upload from your computer are saved in Course Files or the Content Collection in the top-level folder. Attachments you upload using the content editor can be launched in a new window and can include alternate text to describe the attachment. The **Description** appears below the forum name on the **Discussion Board** page. Forum descriptions are often used as prompts for discussion and are visible where users are posting.
5. In the **Forum Availability** section, select **Yes** to make the forum available to users.

   Tip: You can create forums ahead of time and set the availability to **No** until the discussion is ready to start.

6. For **Enter Date and Time Restrictions**, you can set forums to display on a specific date and time and to stop displaying on a specific date and time. Select the **Display After** and **Display Until** check boxes to enable the date and time selections. Use the pop-up **Date Selection Calendar** and **Time Selection Menu** to select dates and times or type dates and times in the boxes. Display restrictions do not affect the forum availability, only when it appears.



7. Select the **Forum Settings** based on your specific needs.



Viewing Threads/Replies Settings

To promote originality, creativity, and a variety of responses, you can select **Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum**, which is the post first setting. Students must respond before they can read their classmates' posts.

In **Standard View**, users can see all previously created threads in the forum.

Grade Settings

You can create a graded forum or thread and a column is created automatically in the Grade Center.

Select **Grade Discussion Forum** and type a point value to evaluate participants on performance throughout a forum.

Select **Grade Threads** to evaluate participants on performance in each thread.

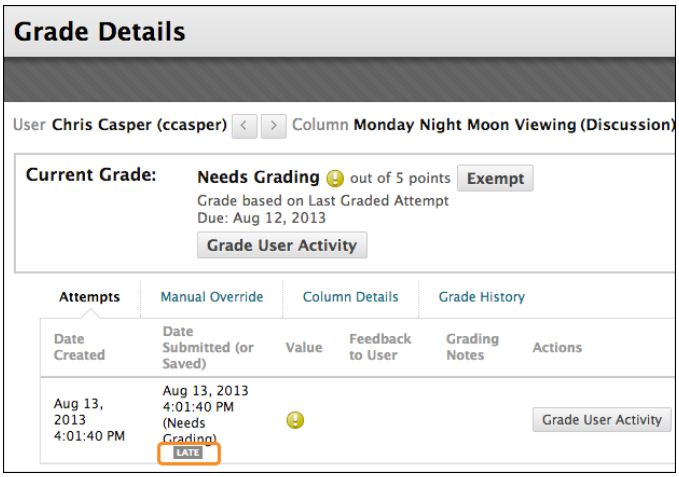
If you are grading posts and want to retain the posts as they were at the time of grading, clear the check box for **Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts**. To learn more about which forum settings to choose to fit your pedagogical requirements, see Set Up Discussions.

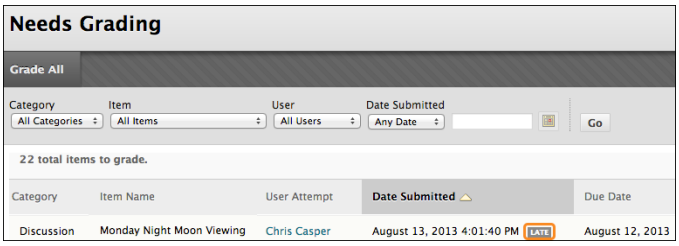
If you enable grading for the forum, select the check box for **Show participants in needs grading status** and select the number of posts from the drop-down list. Applying this setting displays the needs grading icon in the Grade Center and places the posts in the queue on the **Needs Grading** page after users make the specified number of posts. If you select a grading option and do NOT select the check box, the needs grading icon does not appear in the Grade Center and posts do not appear on the **Needs Grading** page. To learn more, see About the Needs Grading Page.

Note: If you choose three posts from the drop-down list and a user submits two, the in progress icon appears in the Grade Center cell and the discussion board until the specified number of posts is met.

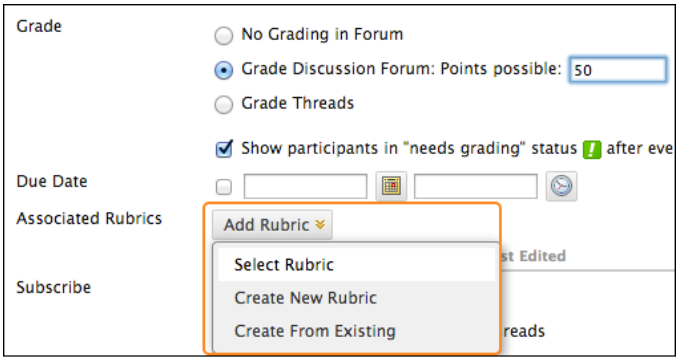
Due Date and Rubric Settings

When grading is enabled, you can select a **Due Date**. Due dates are used to organize and assign gradable items to grading periods in the Grade Center. Graded posts made after the due date are marked **LATE** on the **Grade Details** page in the Grade Center and on the **Needs Grading** page.





You can also associate a rubric to use for grading by pointing to **Add Rubric**. To learn more, see Using Rubrics.



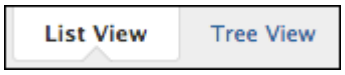
To learn more about some of the other settings, see Subscribing, Moderating Discussions, Tagging Threads, and Rating Posts.

8. Click **Submit**.

On the **Discussion Board** page, the new forum appears at the bottom of the list. To learn how to change the order of forums, see How to Reorder Discussion Forums.

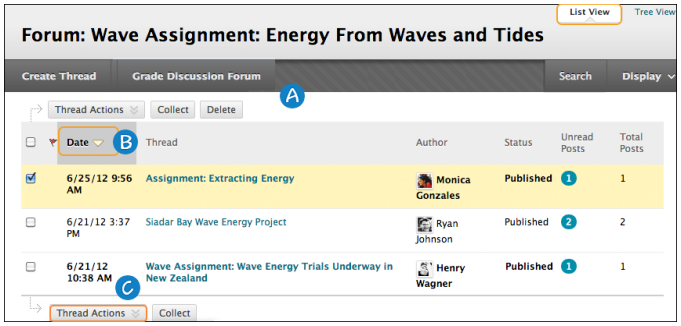
List View and Tree View

After you click a forum title, a page loads displaying all forum threads. View the page in either list view or tree view. This choice remains in effect until you change it. You may change it at any time. Change the view on the forum page, in the upper-right corner.



List View

Click **List View** to present the threads in a table format. Threads containing any unread posts appear in bold type.

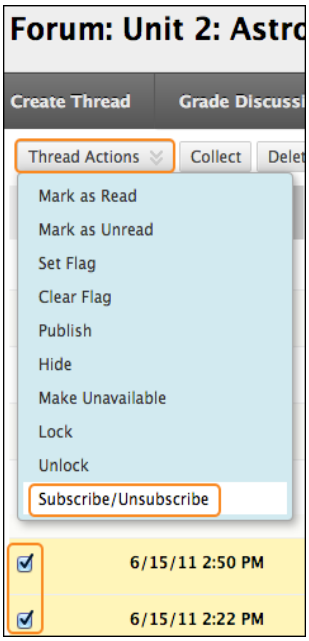


1. From the action bar, you can create threads, collect, or delete posts.

   Note: Depending on the settings you made when creating the forum, different functions appear on the action bar. For example, if you allowed tagging, a **Tags** function appears. If you enabled email subscription for the forum, a **Subscribe** function appears.

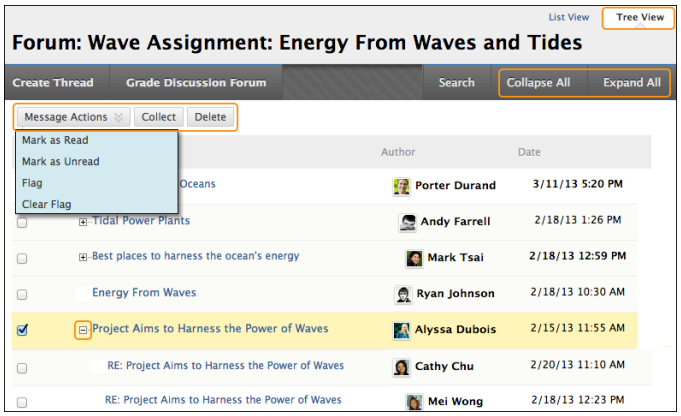
2. To sort a column, click the column heading or caret.

3. Select the check box next to a thread and make a selection from the **Thread Actions** drop-down list. You can select multiple threads or select the check box in the header to select all threads. The actions include:
   - Marking threads read or unread.
   - Setting or clearing flags. Flags mark threads for later attention.
   - Editing the status of the selected threads.
   - Subscribing or unsubscribing for email alerts to new posts made to selected threads, if enabled.



Tree View

Click **Tree View** to show the thread starter messages and their replies. From the action bar, you can create threads, collect, or delete posts.



Expand and collapse threads with the plus and minus icons next to the titles. If a thread starter message contains unread posts, the thread starter title appears in bold type. On the action bar, use the **Collapse All** and **Expand All** functions to hide or see all posts included in all threads.

Select the check box next to a thread and make a selection from the **Message Actions** drop-down list on the action bar. You can select multiple threads or select the check box in the header to select all threads. Actions include marking threads read or unread and setting or clearing flags. Flags mark threads for later attention.

How to Allow Email Alerts for New Discussion Posts

When you enable email subscription, students can receive email alerts for new posts or replies. You can allow students to subscribe to an entire forum or to specific threads within a forum.

When you first create a forum or when you edit the forum settings, you select the options for subscriptions to forums or threads.

1. Access a forum's contextual menu.
2. Select **Edit**.
3. On the **Edit Forum** page, in the **Forum Settings** section, select the **Subscribe** options.
   - **Allow members to subscribe to threads**: Users can select specific threads within the forum.
   - **Allow members to subscribe to forum**: Users can subscribe to all threads within the forum.
   - **Include body of post in the email**: Displays the message text and a link to reply to the message in the email notification.
   - **Include link to post**: Displays a link to the message in the email notification.
4. Click **Submit**.

Create Threads

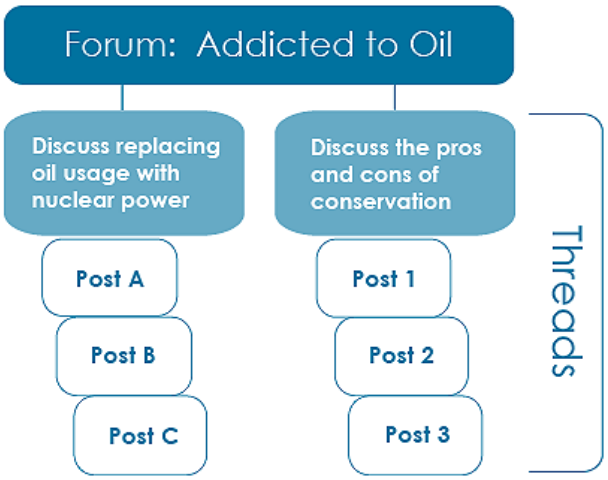
In a discussion board forum, you can start new threads to begin a conversation. A thread includes the initial post and all replies to it. When you create a forum, you can allow or not allow members to start threads. Generally, the purpose of the forum dictates whether members can start threads. A moderated, graded forum used to evaluate student performance is usually tightly controlled, and members cannot create threads. Other forums are designed for members to share opinions and thoughts on tangential or unrelated topics. In this case, you might allow members to create threads and spark discussions.

To help organize your view, you can change the status of existing threads and determine which threads appear in a forum.

Note: Instructors and students create threads in the same way. If you enabled grading, you can also set the thread to be graded.

Example:

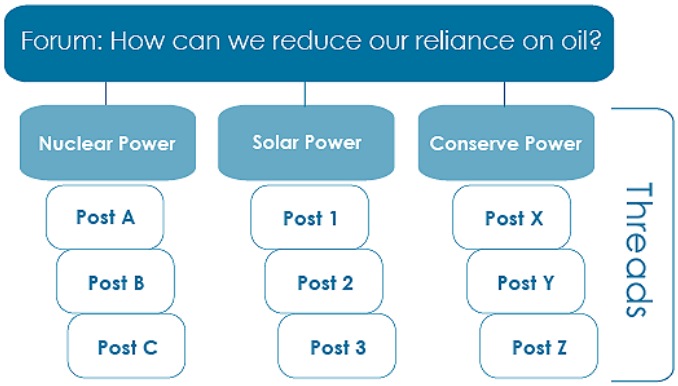
You create a forum that addresses a broad subject, such as "Addicted to Oil." Next, you create two threads containing the specific issues to be discussed, such as replacing oil usage with nuclear power, and the pros and cons of conservation. To ensure students post only to existing threads, consider disallowing thread creation in the forum settings.



Example:

You create a forum and ask a question or provide the instructions or details in the description, such as "How can we reduce our reliance on oil?" Then, students create threads for each solution to the problem of oil addiction. All members post to existing threads to comment on given answers or create new threads to present new solutions. In the forum settings, be sure you select the **Allow Members to Create New Threads** option.

Note: If you enable thread grading, members cannot create new threads.



How to Create Threads

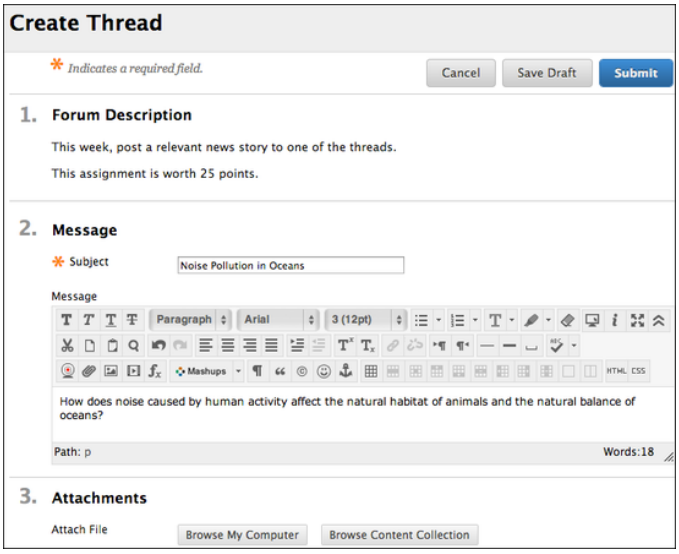
In the following example, you create a graded thread.

Note: Files uploaded by students are not saved in the course repository.

1. Access a discussion board forum.
2. On the action bar, click **Create Thread**. Forum descriptions display when users create a thread and when they encounter a thread with the post first setting. Forum descriptions are often used as prompts for discussion, so they are now visible where users are posting.
3. On the **Create Thread** page, type a **Subject**.
4. Type instructions, a description, or a question in the **Message** box. Optionally, you can use the content editor functions to format the text and include files, images, web links, multimedia, and mashups. Attachments you upload using the content editor can be launched in a new window and can include alternate text to describe the attachment.
5. Alternatively, in the **Attachments** section, attach a file using one of the following options:
   - To upload a file from your computer, click **Browse My Computer**.
   - To upload a file from the course's storage repository:
     - If Course Files is the course's storage repository, click **Browse Course**.

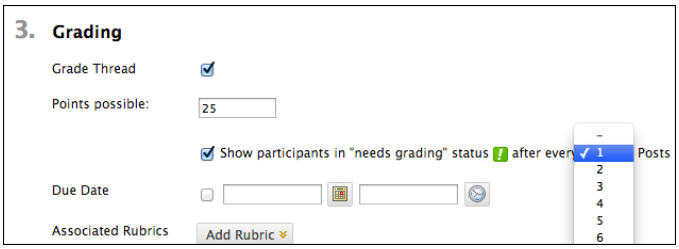
       -OR-

     - If your institution licenses content management, click **Browse Content Collection**.



6. If you chose to grade threads when you created the forum, you decide on a thread-by-thread basis whether to grade a thread. In the **Grading** section, select the check box for **Grade Thread** and type **Points possible**. Select the check box for **Show participants in needs grading status** and select the number of posts from the drop-down list. Applying this setting displays the needs grading icon in the Grade Center and places the posts in the queue on the **Needs Grading** page after users make the specified number of posts. If you select a grading option and do NOT select the check box, the needs grading icon does not appear in the Grade Center and posts do not appear on the **Needs Grading** page. To learn more, see About the Needs Grading Page.

   Note: If you choose three posts from the drop-down list and a user submits two, the in progress icon appears in the Grade Center cell and the discussion board until the specified number of posts is met. You can also associate a rubric to use for grading by pointing to **Add Rubric**. To learn more, see Using Rubrics.



7. Click **Save Draft** to store a draft of the post or click **Submit** to create the thread.

The newly created thread appears in the forum.

If you enabled thread grading, two functions appear in the **Grade** column:

1. Click **Grade Thread** to evaluate the posts.
2. Click **Grade** to enable grading for a thread and assign a value.

How to Change a Thread's Status

You can change the status of a thread to keep students focused on relevant discussions and to help organize a forum containing many threads. When a user creates and submits a thread, it is assigned the **Published** status.

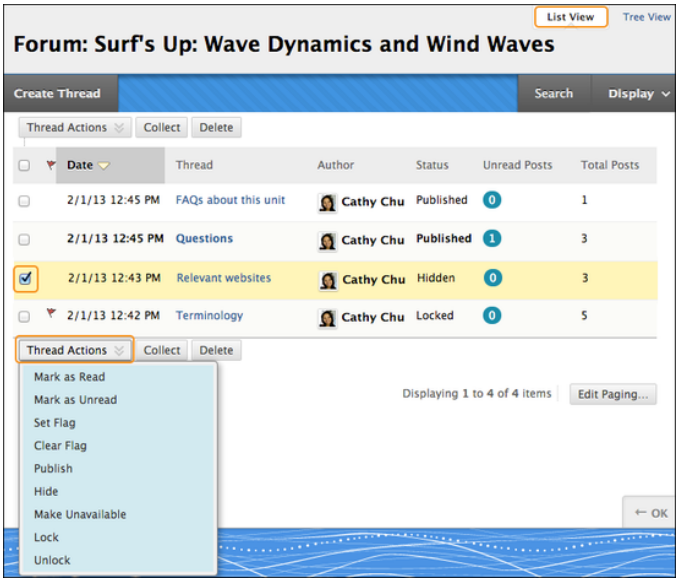
The following table describes which thread status to select to accomplish various objectives.

Status	Goal for Thread
Publish	Make a thread available to all users.
Hide	Hide a thread from immediate view, but still allow users the option of reading the thread. Unneeded content is hidden from view, helping users find relevant content. Users cannot reply to or edit hidden threads even if editing is enabled for the thread. Users can view hidden threads using the **Display** drop-down list on the action bar. When you do not want the thread hidden, change the status to **Publish**.
Make Unavailable	Hide a thread from view of all users except forum managers.
Lock	Allow users to read a thread, but not edit or add to it. Locking a thread allows you to assign grades without users updating or changing posts.
Unlock	Unlock a locked thread to select another status.

Use the following steps to change the status of a thread or multiple threads at one time.

Note: Alternatively, access a thread's contextual menu and select a thread status.

1. Access a forum and change to **List View**, if needed.
2. Select the check box next to each thread requiring a change of status. You can select multiple threads or select the check box in the header to select all threads.
3. From the **Thread Actions** drop-down list, select a new status for the selected thread or threads.

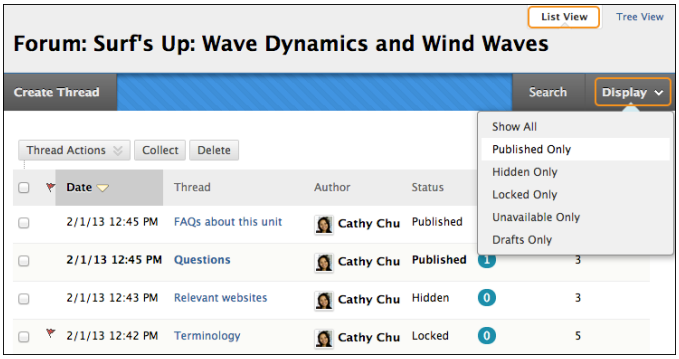


The status for each thread appears in the **Status** column. If you save a draft of a thread to edit in the future, **Draft** appears in the **Status** column. To access your drafts, you must select **Show All** or **Drafts Only** from the **Display** drop-down list on the action bar.

How to Change Which Threads Appear

If you have many threads in a forum and assign different statuses to the threads, you can choose which threads appear in a forum. For example, if you start several threads and save them as drafts, you can choose to show only those drafts and select the threads to edit and publish.

1. Access the forum and change to **List View**, if needed.
2. On the action bar, point to **Display** to access the drop-down list.
3. Select the type of threads to view in the forum.



The forum page displays only those threads that have the status selected from the **Display** drop-down list.

Save a Post as a Draft to Submit Later

The **Save Draft** function is available if you need to return to your post at a later time. This function saves your comments and files on the page.

To access your post later, return to the forum page and point to **Display** to access the drop-down list. Select **Drafts Only** to view the saved post. While viewing your post, point to it to view the functions for **Edit** and **Delete**. When you click **Edit**, the content editor opens.

You can make edits, add or delete files, and use the functions in the content editor. Click **Submit** to publish the post.

Reply to Discussion Posts

In the discussion board, threads grow as users respond to the initial and subsequent posts. Replies build on one another to construct a conversation. As the number of posts grows, users can filter, sort, collect, and tag posts, if tagging is enabled. To learn more about tagging, see How to Tag Threads.

To help students understand your expectations, establish discussion etiquette immediately. You can model proper online interaction and reinforce appropriate behavior with public recognition. In addition, you can provide specific guidelines, such as:

- Use descriptive subject lines to make threads easy to follow and scan.
- Keep posts short and use uncomplicated language. Your audience is reading onscreen and may have several messages to read.
- Back up your statements when you agree or disagree with others.
- Use professional language, including proper grammar, in academic-related posts. No slang, emoticons, or chat acronyms allowed.
- Use attachments or links to websites for long, detailed information.
- Stay on topic. If you want to introduce a new tangent, find a suitable forum or start a new thread if it is allowed.
- Be respectful of other people's opinions and remember the golden rule—to treat others as you want to be treated.

For graded forums and threads, tell students specifically what you expect both in terms of quantity and quality of posts, and consider sharing some exemplary posts. You can also use rubrics to help students understand your objectives. By compiling your grading criteria in a rubric, you can provide students with clear performance standards and grade consistently. To learn more, see Using Rubrics.

How to Reply to a Thread

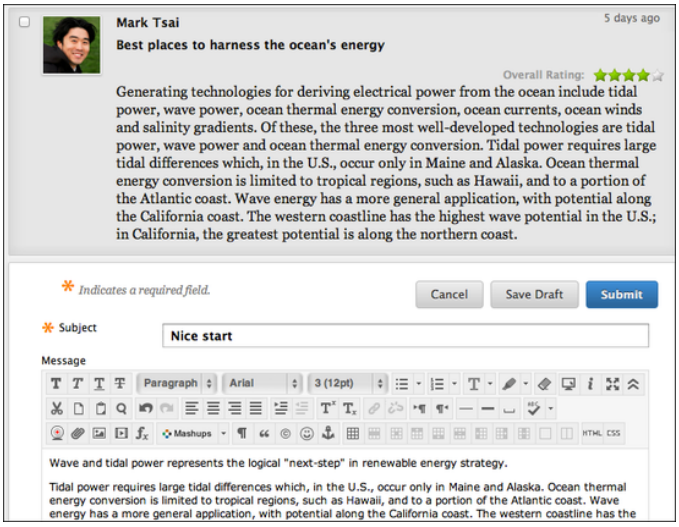
Note: Users can reply to published threads, but cannot reply to locked or hidden threads. To learn more, see How to Change a Thread's Status.

1. Access a forum and select a thread.
2. On the thread's page, you can view the text of the post and information, such as the author and posted date. All replies appear on the same page with the parent post.
3. For the first post, click **Reply**. Point to the post to see other functions such as **Quote**, **Edit**, **Delete**, and **Email Author**. The **Quote** function includes the post's text as part of your reply. For other posts on the page, point to the message and **Reply** and the other functions appear.

Note: If you want to view only the unread posts in the thread, click the unread link on the action bar. The unread posts appear on one page.

4. The page expands below the post you are responding to, allowing you to view the post and access the content editor.
5. If needed, edit the **Subject**. Provide your reply in the **Message** box. Optionally, use the content editor functions to to format the text and include files, images, web links, multimedia, and mashups. Attachments you upload using the content editor can be launched in a new window and can include alternate text to describe the attachment.

Note: Files uploaded by students are not saved to the course repository.



6. Alternatively, following the **Message** box, attach a file using one of the following options:
   - To upload a file from your computer, click **Browse My Computer**.
   - To upload a file from the course's storage repository:
     - If Course Files is the course's storage repository, click **Browse Course**.

     -OR-

- If your institution licenses content management, click **Browse Content Collection**.

7. Click **Save Draft** to store a draft of the post or click **Submit** to publish your reply.

On the thread page, your reply appears at the end of the list. If you attached a file, a paper clip icon appears next to the post's title. If you used the **Insert/Edit Image** function, the image appears with the text you provided.

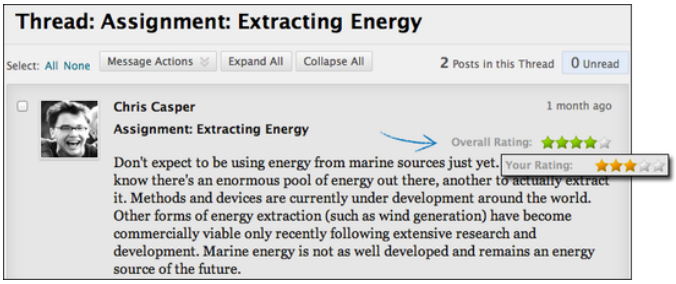
How to Rate Posts

You can use the discussion board for peer review. Students start threads and include their work in their initial posts. Other users review the work, assign a rating to the initial post, and include comments in a response.

Rating posts also allows users to focus on messages considered especially informative or useful by others. If you enabled rating, users can rate posts using a five star system. You can also rate posts.

Note: To enable rating, select the **Allow Members to Rate Posts** option when creating or editing the forum. To learn more, see How to Edit Forums.

1. Access a forum and select a thread.
2. On the thread's page, when you point to a thread's rating area, it changes to show **Your Rating**.
3. Select one to five stars. You can add and delete stars at any time.
4. Your rating is included in the **Overall Rating**—the combined rating of all users.



Manage Discussions

You can perform tasks to manage both the discussion board itself and the content within forums and threads. For example, to keep students focused as the term progresses, edit forum settings or organize forums and threads to attract attention again. You can also add forums to other locations, edit content, and delete unneeded forums or threads. To help students locate important posts, you can enable tagging and attach tags.

You can assign forum roles to limit access to a forum or to help with forum administration. For example, to help control the discussion board content that is presented to your students, you can assign a responsible user the role of moderator. To learn more, see Moderate Discussions.

Frequently Asked Questions

You can make some simple changes to help you successfully manage your discussion board content.

A discussion forum has been available for two weeks with few contributions. What changes can I make to the forum to encourage participation?

Two changes you can make:

- If the topic is potentially controversial, allow anonymous posts.
- If you are not grading threads, allow students to create new threads. This flexibility may encourage students to post their ideas and questions.

By the end of the semester, my discussion board contains dozens of forums. What can I do to provide better organization and flow?

To keep your discussion board organized:

- Change the order of the forums, placing the most current forums at the top of the list.
- Delete ungraded forums that were not used or contain few postings.

How to Edit Forums

As the discussion progresses, you can solve some discussion issues by editing forum settings. For example, if students are posting to the wrong topic, you can fine-tune the forum name or description to clarify the forum's purpose.

Tip: You can create all forums at the beginning of the term and make them unavailable. When you need a forum, edit the forum to make it available.

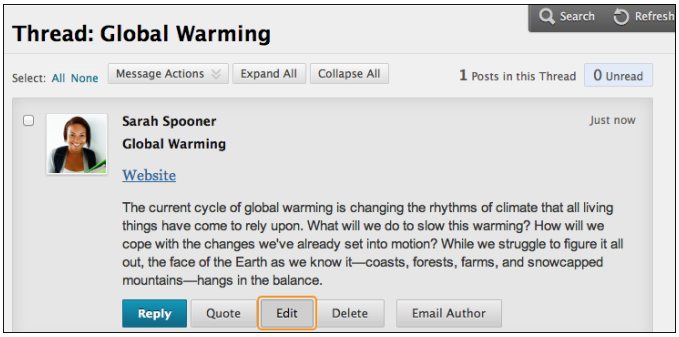
1. Access a forum's contextual menu.
2. Select **Edit**.

3. On the **Edit Forum** page, change the forum's name, description, availability, and settings. To learn about disabling the grading setting, see How to Disable Discussion Grading.
4. Click **Submit**.

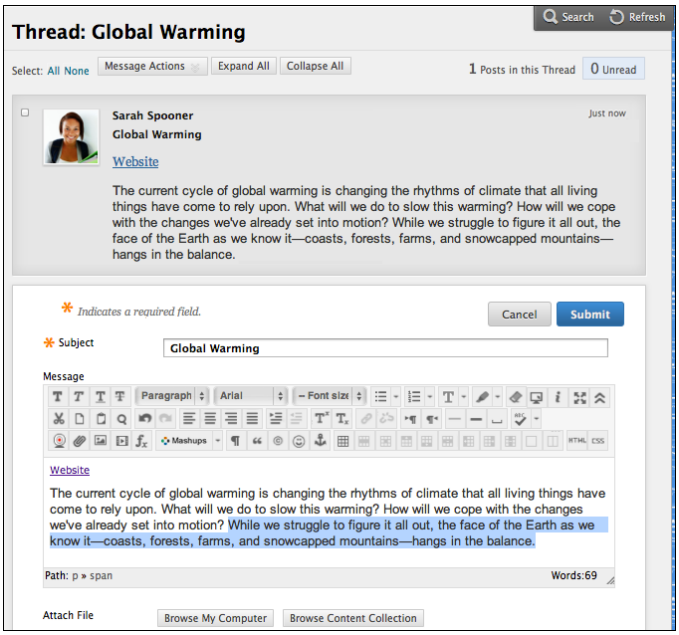
How to Edit Threads

You can edit posts in any thread. If a student added inappropriate or inaccurate content, you can edit the post. When you create or edit a forum, you determine whether students are allowed to edit their published posts.

1. Access a forum and select a thread.
2. On the thread's page, point to a post so all of the functions appear.
3. Click **Edit**.



4. The page expands to allow you to make edits in the content editor while viewing the original post.



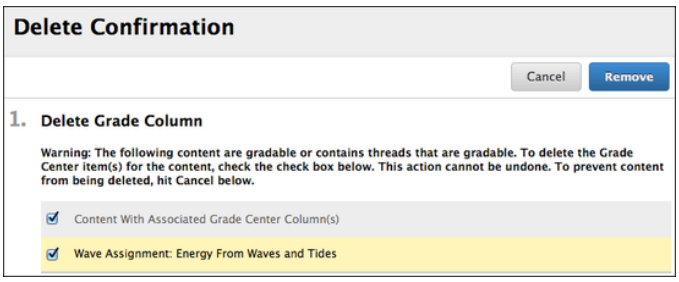
5. Click **Submit**. Your edits appear in the post.

How to Delete Forums and Threads

When you delete a forum or thread, all content is permanently deleted. You will not be able to refer to the posts if a student wants to dispute a grade. For a less permanent solution, you can make a forum unavailable.

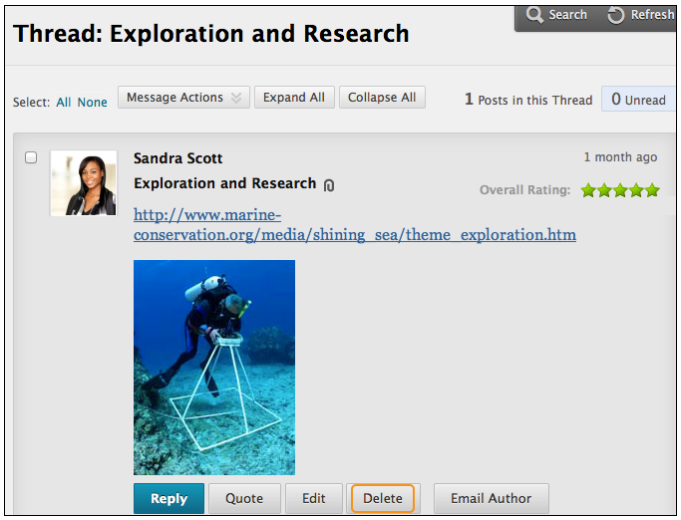
When you delete graded discussion content, you determine if the Grade Center column and scores are also deleted.

1. Access a forum or thread's contextual menu.
2. Select **Delete** to permanently delete the forum or thread's content.
3. Click **OK** in the pop-up window.
4. On the **Delete Confirmation** page, you have two options:
   - ***Do not select check boxes***: The graded forum or thread will be deleted, but the Grade Center column and scores you assigned are retained. For example, you graded all students' posts and want to keep the Grade Center column for the final grade calculations. If you delete the forum or thread, yet retain the Grade Center column, you can delete that column from the Grade Center at any time.
   - ***Select the check boxes***: The grade column in the Grade Center ***and*** the forum or thread are deleted. For example, if you do not want to include the grade column for the discussion posts in the final grade, you can safely delete both.
5. Click **Remove**.



Delete Individual Posts

On a thread's page, you can delete individual posts within a thread using the **Delete** function. This action is irreversible. Any replies to the post you are deleting will also be permanently deleted.



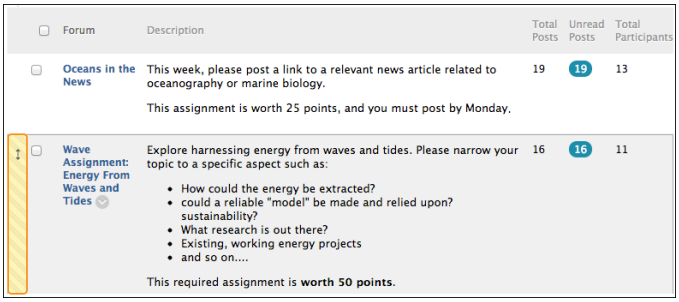
How to Reorder Forums

You can help students focus on the most relevant content by reorganizing your discussion board. When you create a forum, it is added to the bottom of the list. You can move the current forum to the top or delete forums that are no longer relevant.

Reorder forums using the drag-and-drop function—a double-tipped arrow or handle—to move them into place. Alternatively, reorder forums using the keyboard accessible reordering tool on the action bar.

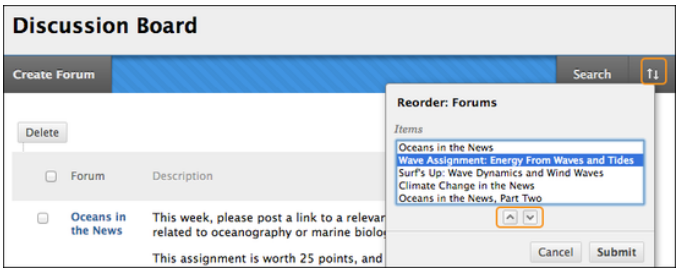
Drag-and-Drop Function

1. Access the discussion board and press the arrows next to a forum you want to move. The item is highlighted.
2. Drag the forum into a new location in the list.
3. Release the forum to place it in its new location.



Keyboard Accessible Reordering Tool

1. On the action bar, click the keyboard accessible reordering icon represented by two arrows.
2. In the **Reorder** box, select a forum title.
3. Below the **Reorder** box, use the up and down arrows to adjust the order.
4. Click **Submit**. A pop-up box states: **Items have been reordered**.



5. Click **OK**.

How to Copy Forums

You can copy discussion forums and add them to the current discussion board or to a group discussion board in the same course. Copying does not delete the content from the original location in a course. You have the option to copy a forum, the settings, and the posts, or to copy just a forum's settings.

Note: To copy discussion board forums to another course, use the copy course utility. To learn more, see Copying Courses.

Example: ***Copy the entire forum***

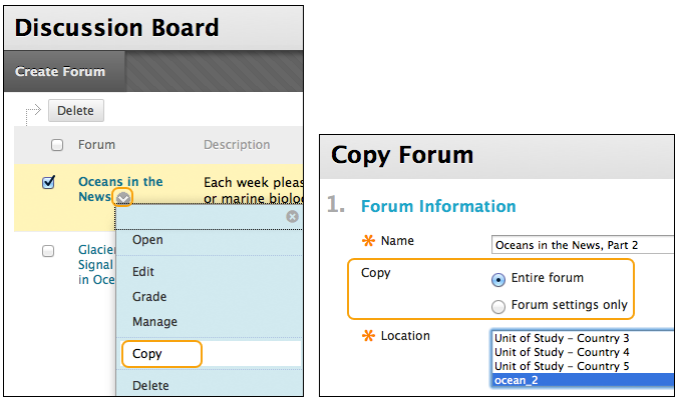
If two distinct topics emerge during a discussion, you can create separate forums for these topics. Copy the forum and delete the off-topic posts from each forum.

When you copy content, all threads and replies appear in the new location, along with any file attachments.

Example: ***Copy forum settings only***

You can base a new forum on the settings from another forum. If you want students to submit a second research paper, copy the settings of the first research paper's forum. The forum is added with no threads.

1. Access a forum's contextual menu.
2. Select **Copy**.



3. On the **Copy Forum** page, type a **Name**.
4. Select the option to copy either: **Entire forum** or **Forum settings only**.

5. In the **Location** box, select a discussion board to copy to. To select the course's discussion board, select the course ID.
6. Click **Submit**. On the **Discussion Board** page, the copied forum is added to the bottom of the list.

Note: Discussion forums you copy to a group discussion board only include messages authored by the group's members.

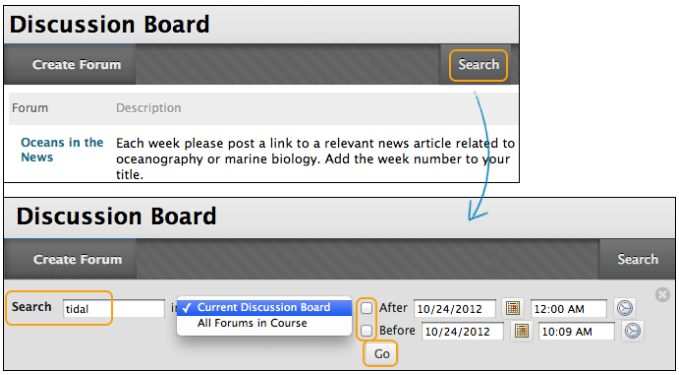
Search and Collect Discussions

In the discussion board, you can search for specific text, such as a phrase, word, or part of a word. The results appear on a search results page.

How to Search Discussions

1. Access the discussion board, a forum, or a thread.
2. On the action bar, click **Search**. The **Search** field expands.
3. Type a search criterion in the **Search** box.
4. In the drop-down list, select an area to search:
   - **Current Discussion Board**
   - **All Forums in Course**
   - **Current Forum**
   - **Current Thread**

   Note: The options in the drop-down list depend on where your search began. **All Forums in Course** includes any group discussion boards in your course. Students do not see results from group discussion boards unless they are members of that group.
5. To further narrow your search results, select the **After** and **Before** check boxes to enable the date and time selections. Type dates and times in the boxes or use the pop-up **Date Selection Calendar** and **Time Selection Menu** to select dates and times.
6. Click **Go**.



On the **Search Results** page, you can read and print the results. On the action bar, click **Print Preview** to open the page in a new window in a printer-friendly format. Posts print in the order they appear on the page. To select which posts appear and in which order, you can filter and sort posts using the **Filter** function and the **Sort By** and **Order** drop-down lists on the action bar.

On this page, you can also reply to posts and mark messages read or unread. Click the **Quote** function to include the post's text as part of your reply. To view the responses to a post, click the post's hyperlinked title to navigate to the thread's page.

How to Collect Posts

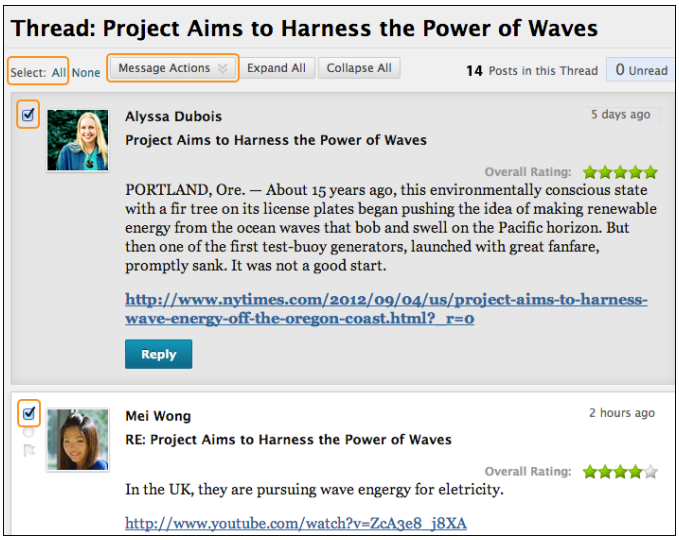
On a thread page, you can read all the posts made to the initial post. If many posts appear, you can reduce the list using the collect function. After collecting posts, you can filter, sort, print, and tag them. To learn about tagging posts, see How to Tag Threads.

The collect function is also available from the forum page where you can gather all the posts made to different threads. After collecting posts, filter and sort the messages to further organize them.

Use the following steps to collect posts in a thread.

Note: To select all but a few posts in a long list in a thread, click **Select: All** on the action bar. All check boxes for all the posts are selected and you can clear the check boxes for the posts you do not need.

1. Access a forum and select a thread.
2. On the thread's page, select the check boxes of the posts to collect. If a post has replies and you want them to appear on a collection page, select the check boxes for those messages.
3. On the action bar, point to the **Message Actions** drop-down list and select **Collect**.



On the **Collection** page, you can read and print the results. On the action bar, click **Print Preview** to open the page in a new window in a printer-friendly format. Posts print in the order they appear on the page. To select which posts appear and in which order, you can filter and sort posts using the **Filter** function and the **Sort By** and **Order** drop-down lists on the action bar.

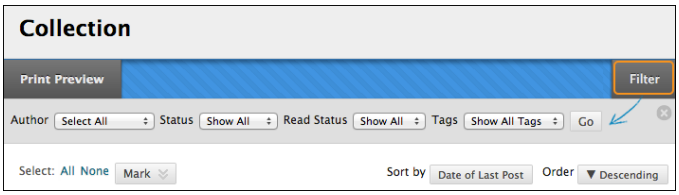
On this page, you can also reply to posts and mark messages read or unread. Click the **Quote** function to include the post's text as part of your reply. To view the responses to a post, click the post's hyperlinked title to navigate to the thread's page.

How to Filter Posts After Searching or Collecting

To narrow your search results or sort a collection, you can use the filter function. If you print the posts after filtering, they print in the order they appear on the page.

Note: If the author or authors of some posts are no longer enrolled in your course, the posts may appear out of order.

1. On the **Search Results** or **Collection** page, click the **Filter** function on the action bar to expand the field. Select options from the following drop-down lists:
   - **Author**: Select All or select an author.
   - **Status**: Show All or select a status.
   - **Read Status**: Select Show All, Read, or Unread posts.
   - **Tags**: Show All tags or select a tag. You need to enable the tag function at the forum level for this drop-down to appear.
2. Click **Go** to apply the selections. You can further organize the results using the **Filter** function and the **Sort By** and **Order** drop-down lists on the action bar.
3. Click the **X** to close the **Filter** field.



How to Sort Posts After Searching or Collecting

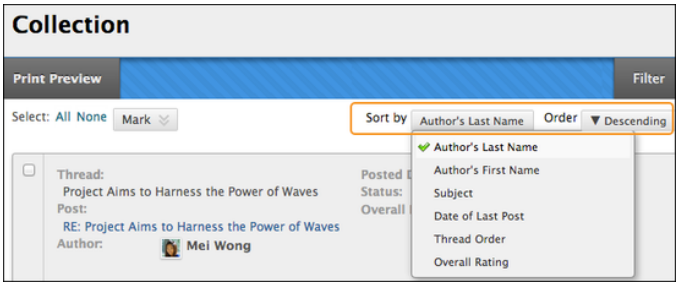
To narrow your search results or sort a collection, you can use the **Sort by** and **Order** drop-down lists. If you print the posts after sorting, the posts print in the order they appear on the page.

Note: If the author or authors of some posts are no longer enrolled in your course, the posts may appear out of order.

1. On the **Search Results** or **Collection** page, point to **Sort by** on the action bar to access the drop-down list.
2. Select an option:

   Note: If you enabled the rating of posts, you can also sort by **Overall Rating**.

   - **Author's Last Name**
   - **Author's First Name**
   - **Subject**
   - **Date of Last Post**
   - **Thread Order**
3. On the action bar, point to **Order** to access the drop-down list.
4. Sort posts in ascending or descending order.



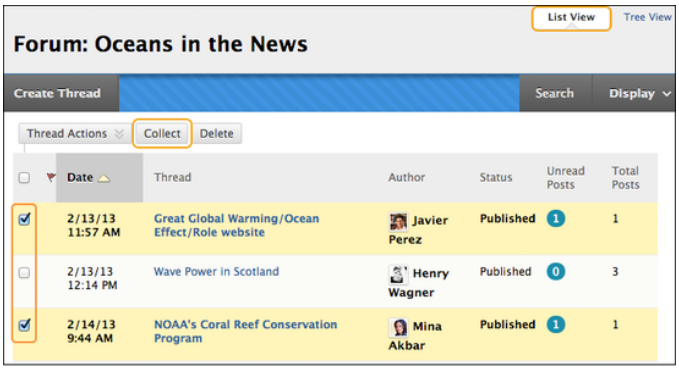
How to Tag Threads

Tags are text labels that act like bookmarks. You can tag posts to group similar messages together. For example, if the subject of ***scientific notation*** is discussed often, tag each of the posts on this topic. Students can read, filter, and search messages using these tags, but they cannot create tags.

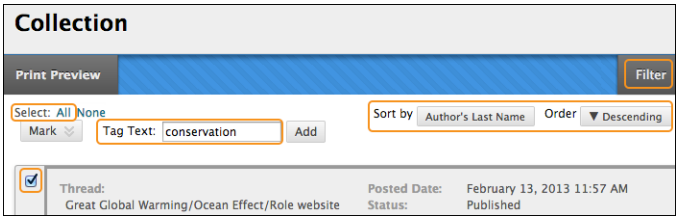
In a forum's settings, you must enable **Allow Post Tagging** so you can create tags.

Tip: For faster discussion board loading, you can disable post tagging when forum usage is heavy. When you enable tagging again, all tags are restored.

1. Access the forum containing the threads to tag.
2. In **List View**, select the check boxes for the thread or threads to tag. You can select all the threads in a forum by selecting the check box in the header row.
3. On the action bar, click **Collect**.



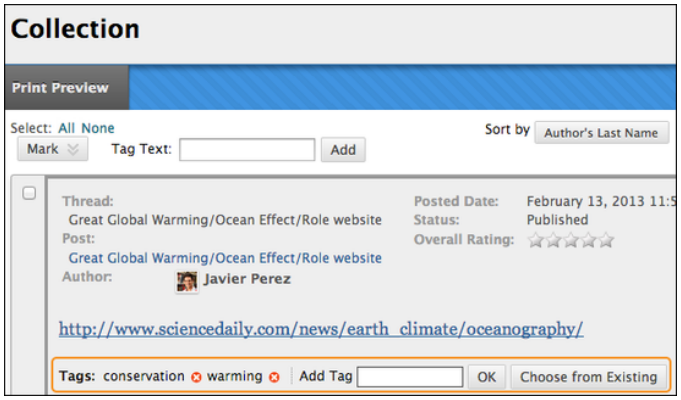
4. On the **Collection** page, you can filter and sort your results.
5. Type a tag name in the **Tag Text** box.
6. Select the check boxes of the messages to assign the tag name to. To select all the messages, click **Select: All** above the list.
7. Click **Add** next to the **Tag Text** box.



On the Collection Page

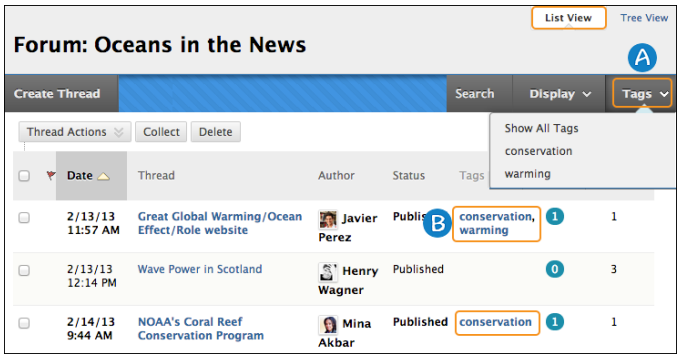
On the **Collection** page, the tag you provided appears below each message you selected. If you provide multiple tags, all appear. You can include more tags following the same steps. To delete a tag, click the red **X** next to it.

Alternatively, you can add a tag to an individual message. Below the message, type the tag in the **Add Tag** box and click **OK** or click **Choose from Existing** to choose a tag from a list of tags that appear on the **Collection** page.



On the Forum Page

On the forum page, all tags appear in the **Tags** column. The column is only visible in **List View**.

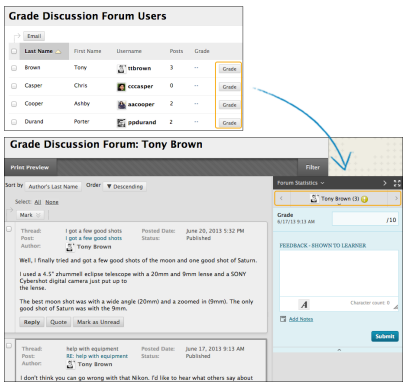


1. On the action bar, click **Tags** to access the drop-down list and select a tag or **Show All Tags**. After you make a selection, only those messages appear on the forum page.
2. To sort messages by tag, click a tag in the **Tags** column. The messages with that tag appear on a collection page.

Grade Discussions

Do You Have the Inline Grading Update?

Click the images in the table to enlarge them in your browser and make the text readable. Use your browser's back button to return to the topic.

Updated Inline Grading	Grading Not Updated
If your discussion grading interface looks like the following image, you have the updated inline grading. You will see a wider, blue sidebar area on the right side of your screen where you add a grade and feedback. You can select individual students from the name drop-down list at the top of the right sidebar. For information that applies to your system, see Grading Discussions Inline.	If your discussion grading interface looks like the following image, your school has not installed the grading updates. You do not have the updated inline grading if the right side panel is divided into sections and the first section is called **Forum Statistics**. The information you need about grading appears in this topic.
	

Grading Overview

In a face-to-face classroom setting, students are expected to participate in class discussions and that participation is part of the equation when assessing performance. You may find that assessing this type of participation is ambiguous. How do you differentiate between a student who is active, but does not advance the discussion, from a student who speaks less frequently, but with greater impact?

Student interactions with the discussion board create a permanent record of participation, yet you also need to have reasonable expectations about what can be accomplished in an online discussion. Due to its nature, more time may be needed for well-articulated points to emerge in the online environment. In addition to providing a practical number of course discussion opportunities, students need timely and constructive responses regarding the quality of their contributions. Evaluation not only lets them know how they performed, but shapes the improvement of future interactions.

You can assign discussion grades within a forum or thread. You can assign grades based on student participation, on the quality of their posts, or a combination of the two. You can create rubrics and refer to them while grading forums and threads, but you need to create and associate the rubrics in advance. To learn more, see Using Rubrics.

The following table details the four steps in the discussion grading process.

Activity	Description
Create	When you create a graded forum or thread, a column is created automatically in the Grade Center. The name of the forum or thread is used as the column title. You can edit the title in the Grade Center.
Participate	Students participate in the discussion. As the discussion progresses, you can participate and provide feedback by replying to, rating, and moderating posts. To learn more, see Reply to Discussion Posts and Moderate Discussions.
Grade	You view students' posts and assign grades. You can lock threads after they are graded.
View Grade	The grades are saved in the discussion board and the Grade Center. Students can view their grades in **My Grades**.

How to Enable Discussion Grading

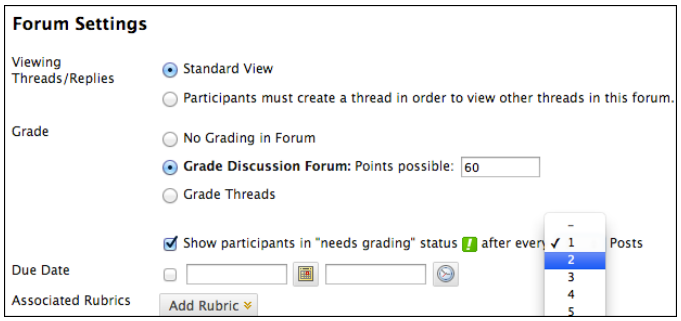
When you create or edit a forum, you can enable grading options. After you enable grading, a Grade Center column is created automatically.

The grade settings appear in the **Forum Settings** section of the **Create Forum** page and the **Edit Forum** page.

- Select **Grade Discussion Forum** and type a point value to evaluate participants on performance throughout a forum.
- Select **Grade Threads** to evaluate participants on performance in each thread.
- Optionally, select the check box for **Show participants in needs grading status** and select the number of posts required to show participants in needs grading status. Applying this setting will show the needs grading icon—the exclamation mark—in the Grade Center after a user makes the specified number of posts. Also, the posts are placed in the queue on the **Needs Grading** page.

  Note: If you choose three posts from the drop-down list and a user submits two, the in progress icon appears in the Grade Center cell and the discussion board until the specified number of posts is met.

- If you select a grading option and do NOT select the check box, the needs grading icon does not appear in the Grade Center and posts do not appear on the **Needs Grading** page. In the Grade Center, users' attempts will appear with the in progress icon when they post. To learn more, see About the Needs Grading Page.
- Optionally, associate a rubric by pointing to **Add Rubric**. This option appears in the **Forum Settings** section when **Grade Forum** is selected, and in the **Grading** section of the **Create Thread** page when **Grade Threads** is selected.



Enable Thread Grading Before or After Thread Creation

If you chose to grade threads when you created a forum, you decide on a thread-by-thread basis whether to grade a thread.

Note: If you select the **Grade Threads** option, users cannot create new threads.

1. On the **Create Thread** page, select the **Grade Thread** check box and type the **Points possible**. You can determine when posts go into needs grading status by selecting the check box for **Show participants in needs grading status** and selecting the number of posts from the drop-down list.
2. Click **Submit**.
3. In the forum, the **Grade Thread** function appears in the thread's **Grade** column.

You can also enable thread grading directly from the thread list in a forum.

1. Click the **Grade** function in a thread's **Grade** column.
2. Type the **Points possible**.
3. Click **Submit**. The **Grade Thread** function appears in a thread's **Grade** column.

How to Grade Forum Participation

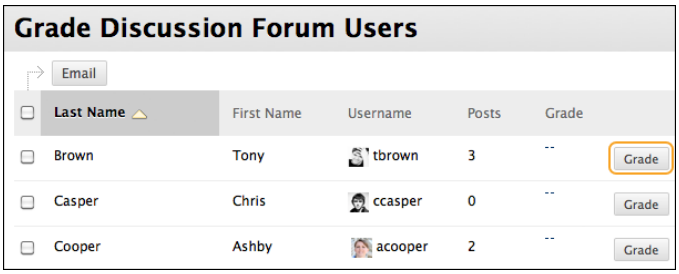
You can assign discussion grades to evaluate participants on performance throughout a forum. When you create or edit a forum, you can enable forum grading options and a Grade Center column is created automatically.

Only users with a role of manager or grader can assign grades for posts. However, a grader cannot view his or her own work. To learn more, see About Forum Roles.

You can create rubrics and refer to them while grading forums, but you must create and associate the rubrics in advance.

1. Access the discussion forum where you enabled forum grading and click **Grade Discussion Forum** on the action bar.

2. On the **Grade Discussion Forum Users** page, click **Grade** in a user's row with a number in the **Posts** column.

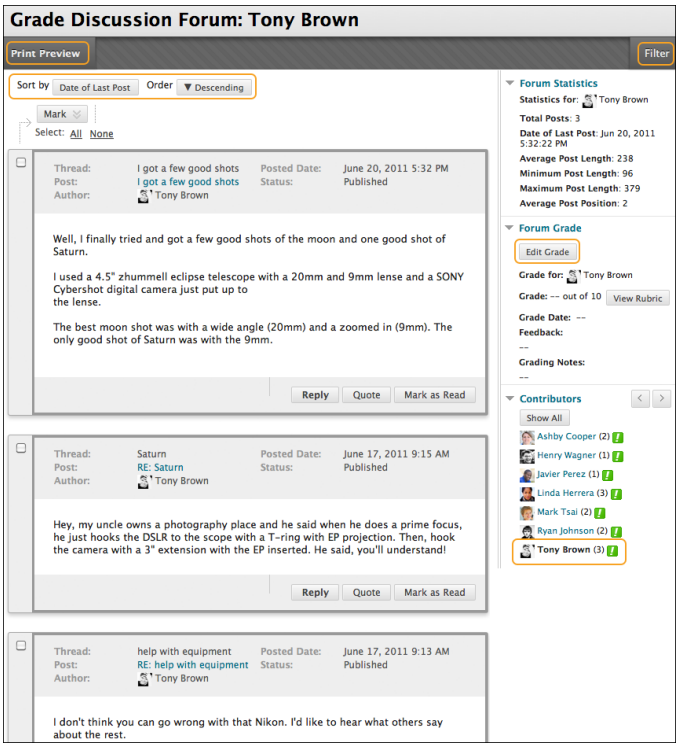


3. On the **Grade Discussion Forum** page, a collection of the student's posts made to the graded forum appears. Since you can assign a forum grade based on multiple threads, all messages posted by a student are included for review. On the action bar, click **Print Preview** to open the page in a new window in a printer-friendly format. Posts print in the order they appear on the page. To select which posts appear and in which order, you can filter and sort posts using the **Filter** function and the **Sort By** and **Order** drop-down lists on the action bar.

   The side panel contains three sections:

   - **Forum Statistics**: Includes information about the user's posts, such as **Date of Last Post**, **Average Post Length**, and **Average Post Position**.
   - **Forum Grade**: Includes **Grade**, **Grade Date**, **Feedback**, and **Grading Notes**.
   - **Contributors**: Users who have submitted the required number of posts appear with exclamation marks—the needs grading icon or, if they have not yet reached the required number, the in progress icon. In this section, use the **Previous User** and **Next User** arrows to navigate among users to grade or click a user's name in the list. Click **Show All** to view all users in your course. Users who have not posted to the graded forum are included in the list. Click **Show with Posts Only** to return to the list of users who have posts to grade.

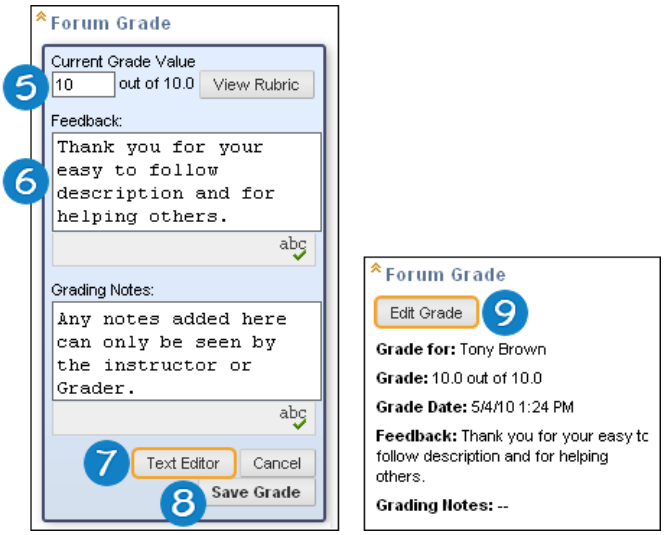
4. In the content frame, evaluate the currently selected user's posts. To assign a grade, click **Edit Grade** in the **Forum Grade** section.



5. Type a numeric value in the **Current Grade Value** box. Assigning a score here removes any Grade Center override that may exist for this user for this forum grade.

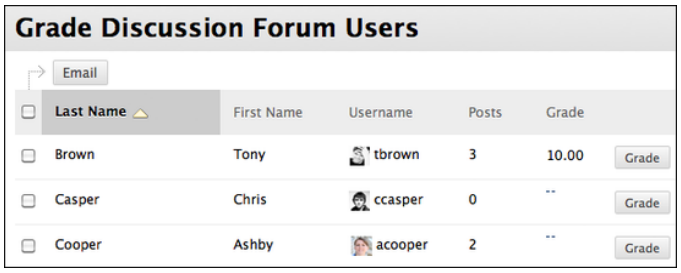
   Note: If you created and added a rubric for this graded forum, click **View Rubric** to reference it while grading.

6. Optionally, type **Feedback** for the user and **Grading Notes**, which appear to the forum manager or grader only. Optionally, use the check spelling function in the bottom of each text box.
7. Optionally, click **Text Editor** to access the content editor in a pop-up window. Use the functions to format the text and include files, images, web links, multimedia and mashups to your feedback or notes.
8. Click **Save Grade**. The information appears in the **Forum Grade** section.
9. Click **Edit Grade** to make changes at any time. The changes appear in the **Forum Grade** section and in the Grade Center column. The changes are recorded in the Grade Center on the user's **Grade Details** page on the **Grade History** tab.



10. When grading is complete, click **OK** to return to the **Grade Discussion Forum Users** page or use the orientation bar to return to the discussion board.

Grades appear in the **Grade** column on the **Grade Discussion Forum Users** page and in the Grade Center.



How to Grade Thread Participation

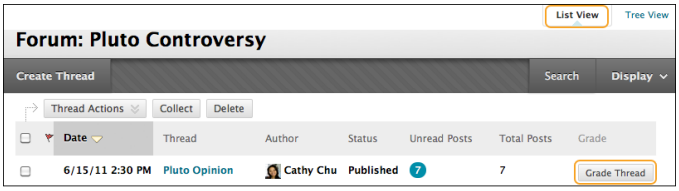
You can assign discussion grades to evaluate participants on performance in each thread. When you create or edit a forum, you can enable thread grading options and a Grade Center column is created automatically.

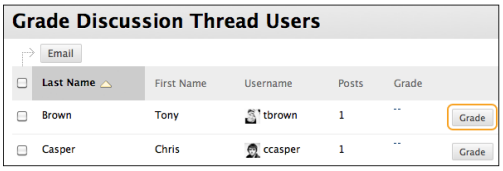
Only users with a role of manager or grader can assign grades for posts. However, a grader cannot view his or her own work. To learn more, see How to Assign Forum Roles.

Note: Students cannot create new threads in a forum where threads are graded.

You can create rubrics and refer to them while grading threads, but you must create and associate the rubrics in advance.

1. Access the discussion forum containing a thread you want to grade.
2. On the thread listing page, in **List View**, click **Grade Thread** in the thread's row.
3. On the **Grade Discussion Thread Users** page, click **Grade** in a user's row with a number in the **Posts** column.



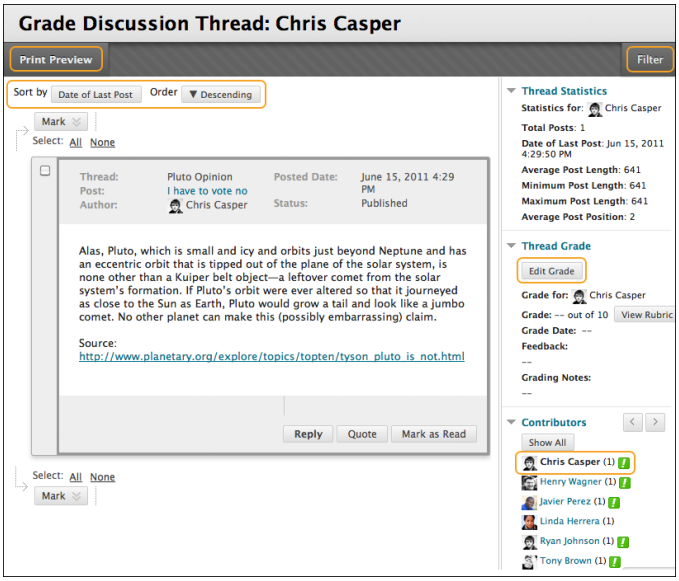


4. On the **Grade Discussion Thread** page, a collection of the student's posts made to the graded thread appears. Since you can assign a thread grade based on multiple messages, all messages posted by a student are included for review. On the action bar, click **Print Preview** to open the page in a new window in a printer-friendly format. Posts print in the order they appear on the page. To select which posts appear and in which order, you can filter and sort posts using the **Filter** function and the **Sort By** and **Order** drop-down lists on the action bar.

   The side panel contains three sections:

   - **Thread Statistics**: Includes information about the user's posts, such as **Date of Last Post**, **Average Post Length**, and **Average Post Position**.
   - **Thread Grade**: Includes **Grade**, **Grade Date**, **Feedback**, and **Grading Notes**.
   - **Contributors**: Users who have submitted the required number of posts appear with exclamation marks—the needs grading icon or, if they have not yet reached the required number, the in progress icon. In this section, use the **Previous User** and **Next User** arrows to navigate among users to grade -OR- click a user's name in the list. Click **Show All** to view all users in your course. Users who have not posted to the graded thread are included in the list. Click **Show with Posts Only** to return to the list of users who have posts to grade.

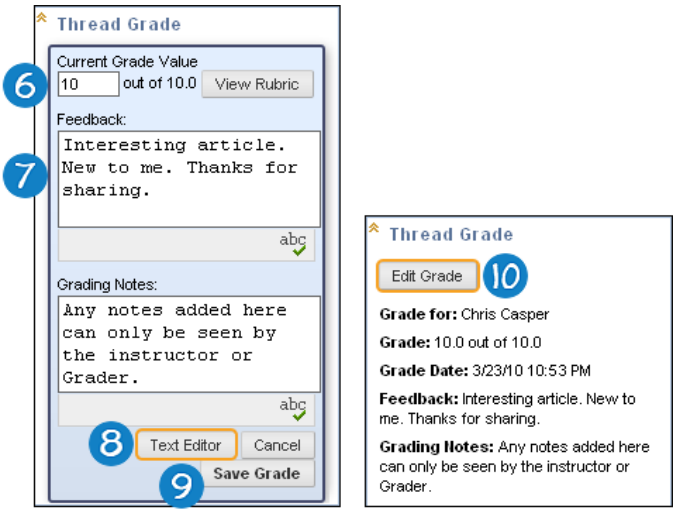
5. In the content frame, click **Edit Grade** in the **Thread Grade** section.



6. Type a numeric value in the **Current Grade Value** box. Assigning a score here removes any Grade Center override that may exist for this user for this thread grade.

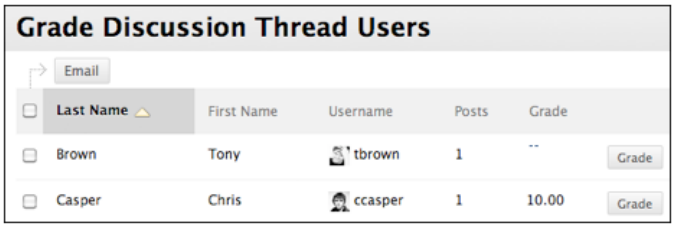
Note: If you created and added a rubric for this graded thread, click **View Rubric** to reference it while grading.

7. Optionally, type **Feedback** for the user and **Grading Notes**, which appear to the forum Manager or Grader only. Optionally, use the check spelling function in the bottom of each text box.
8. Optionally, click **Text Editor** to access the content editor in a pop-up window. Use the functions to format the text and include files, images, web links, multimedia, and mashups to your feedback or notes.
9. Click **Save Grade**. The information appears in the **Thread Grade** section.
10. Click **Edit Grade** to make changes at any time. The changes appear in the **Thread Grade** section and in the Grade Center column. The changes are recorded in the Grade Center on the user's **Grade Details** page on the **Grade History** tab.



11. When grading is complete, click **OK** to return to the **Grade Discussion Thread Users** page or use the orientation bar to return to the discussion board.

Grades appear in the **Grade** column on the **Grade Discussion Thread Users** page and in the Grade Center.



How to Email Users While Grading Discussions

While assigning grades, you can use the email tool in the discussion board to quickly contact students. For example, send a student a question prior to assigning a grade or send feedback after assigning a grade.

1. Navigate to a forum or thread to assign a grade.

2. On the **Grade Discussion Thread Users** page -OR- the **Grade Discussion Forum Users** page, select one or multiple users' check boxes, or select the check box in the header row to select all the users you want to email.
3. On the action bar, click **Email**.
4. On the **Email Forum User** page, edit the **Subject**, if needed.
5. Type a question or feedback in the **Message** box.
6. Click **Submit**.

How to Disable Discussion Grading

Even if grades exist, you can disable grading for graded forums and threads.

1. Access the discussion board and access a forum's contextual menu.
2. Select **Edit**.
3. On the **Edit Forum** page, in the **Forum Settings** section, change the grading option to **No Grading in Forum**.
4. Click **Submit**. If you already assigned grades for a forum or its threads, a warning message appears stating that disabling grading will delete all existing grades. This action is final.
5. Click **OK** to continue or click **Cancel** to preserve the Grade Center items.

Moderate Discussions

You can employ both the art and science of moderating discussions to maintain discussion activity throughout the term. Without vigilance on the your part, even discussions starting out with ample excitement can dwindle as the term progresses.

The ***art of moderating*** involves finding the right balance between guiding the conversation and standing back to allow students to discover new ideas.

The ***science of moderating*** involves using the discussion board functions to keep students focused on relevant discussions and to determine a student's level of access.

About Forum Roles

You can assign forum roles to limit access to a forum or to help with forum administration. For example, to help control the discussion board content that is presented to your students, you can assign a responsible user the role of moderator.

In a forum, each user has a forum role and can have only one role per forum. By default, instructors have the role of manager and students have the role of participant. When you are logged in as an instructor, you cannot change your own forum role.

Note: Your institution determines which course roles are available.

The following table describes the forum roles and their permissions.

Role	Permissions
Manager	Managers have full control over a forum and can change forum settings, moderate posts, and assign roles and grades. Users with a course role of instructor or teaching assistant are granted this role by default.
Builder	Course builders can edit, copy, and delete forums, but not grade or manage forums. Inside a forum, a course builder can perform the same actions on posts as an instructor, with the exception of grading threads. Course builders can also create new threads in a forum, and can enable grading for a thread and type a value. Users with a course role of course builder are granted this forum role by default.
Moderator	Moderators can delete, edit, and lock all posts in any forum, even if the forum does not use the moderation queue. If you use a moderation queue, the moderator approves or rejects posts in the queue before they are made available to all users.

Role	Permissions
	Users with a course role of instructor or course builder are granted this forum role by default.
Grader	Graders can read, reply to, and grade posts. The grader role has some access to the Grade Center, but cannot assign grades to their own work. Users with a course role of grader are granted this forum role by default.
Participant	Participants can read and reply to posts. Users with a course role of student are granted this role by default.
Reader	Readers can read the contents of a forum, but cannot post responses or add threads.
Blocked (Block user from forum	Blocked users cannot access the forum.

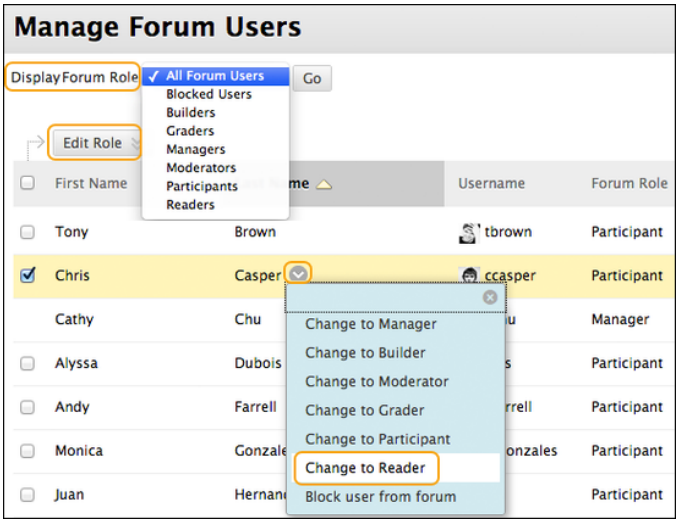
How to Assign Forum Roles

1. Access a forum's contextual menu.
2. Select **Manage**.
3. On the **Manage Forum Users** page, a list of users appears. Access a user's contextual menu.

   Tip: If you want to show only one role at a time, make a selection in the **Display Forum Role** drop-down list on the action bar and click **Go**.

4. Select a new forum role. The new role appears in the **Forum Role** column for the user.
5. Click **OK** to return to the discussion board. Alternatively, click the forum title on the orientation bar to return to the forum.

   Tip: To change multiple roles at one time, select the users' check boxes and point to **Edit Role** on the action bar to access the drop-down list. Select the check box in the header row to select all users.



About Moderating

As an online instructor, your role is to facilitate the conversation and exchange of ideas on the discussion board. You need to ensure that students feel comfortable to share, while also monitoring responses and keeping everyone focused and on track. At the same time, you want to be careful not to dominate or impede the flow of the discussion.

Occasionally, students may introduce inappropriate material for the class discussion. Depending on the maturity and sensitivity of the students in your course, you may need to review student posts for inappropriate content before sharing posts with the rest of the class.

In a discussion forum, you can assign a user the role of moderator. A moderator reviews posts before they are added to a thread and appear in the discussion board.

When you create a moderated forum, all posts to the forum are added to a moderation queue. The moderator reviews each post and does one of the following:

- Publishes the post.
- Returns the post to the sender without a message.
- Returns the post to the sender with a message.

The moderator can delete, edit, and lock posts in a forum even if the forum does not use the moderation queue.

You can choose to moderate a forum when creating it or by editing an existing forum. Only posts added ***after*** enabling forum moderation are available for review in the moderation queue.

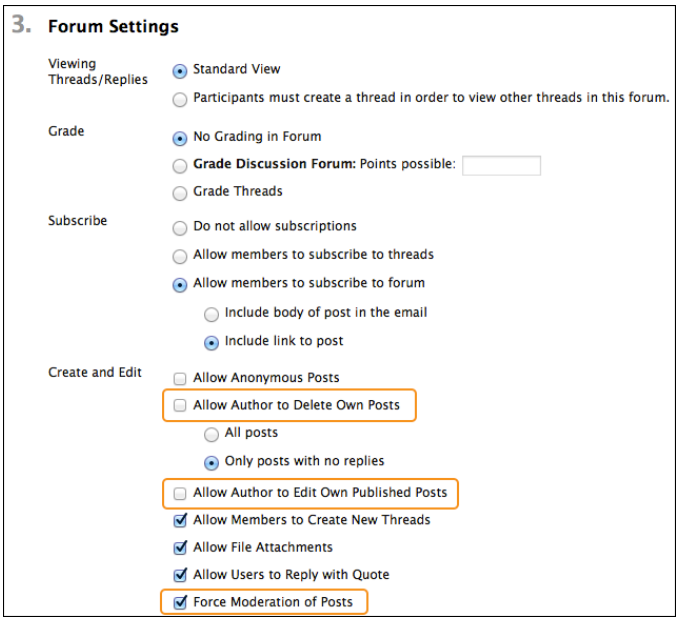
Note: If you do not assign a moderator, the manager must take responsibility for approving posts in a moderated forum.

How to Allow Moderation of Posts

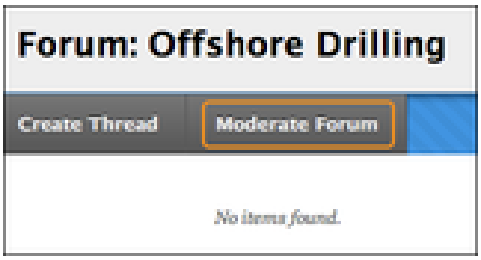
1. Access a forum's contextual menu.

2. Select **Edit**.
3. On the **Edit Forum** page, in the **Forum Settings** section, select the **Force Moderation of Posts** check box and click **Submit**.

   Tip: When choosing a moderated forum, do not allow students to edit or delete posts. This ensures that the post approved is the one viewed by users.

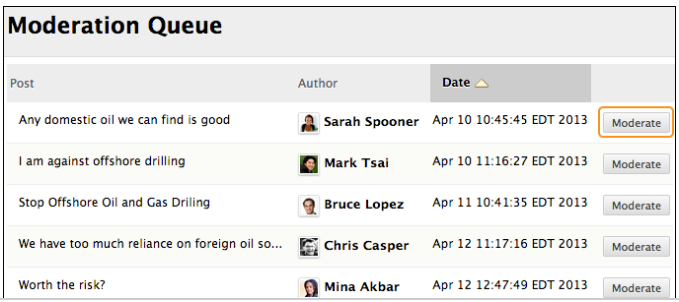


4. After posts are submitted, access the forum. In the moderator view, no posts appear because the messages are waiting approval. On the action bar, click **Moderate Forum**.



   Note: The **Moderate Forum** function appears only to those users who have a forum role of manager or moderator. In the student view, the author can see the post in **Tree View** with a reminder it is in the moderation queue.

5. On the **Moderation Queue** page, the posts appear in alphabetical order by title. Click the column title or caret to sort by post title, author, or date. To review a post, click **Moderate**.



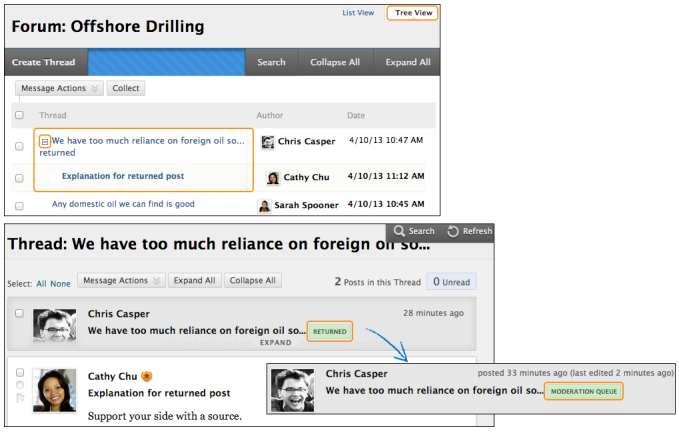
6. On the **Moderate Post** page, read the post and select the **Publish** or **Return** option. Published messages are immediately posted to the thread.
7. Optionally, type feedback in the text box. You can use the content editor functions to format the text, link to files in Course Files or the Content Collection, and include web links, multimedia, and mashups.

   Note: Though feedback is optional, this is an opportunity to provide guidance, ask questions, redirect a student's focus, and explain why a post was returned.

8. Click **Submit**.

Returned posts no longer appear in the moderation queue. In tree view, students see their returned posts in the forum. Expand the post using the plus sign. If feedback was included, students can see why their posts were returned. On the thread page, returned posts display **Returned** next to the post's title.

From the thread page, students can edit their posts while viewing the moderator's feedback and resubmit them. The posts are returned to the moderation queue. **Moderation Queue** appears next to the post's title.



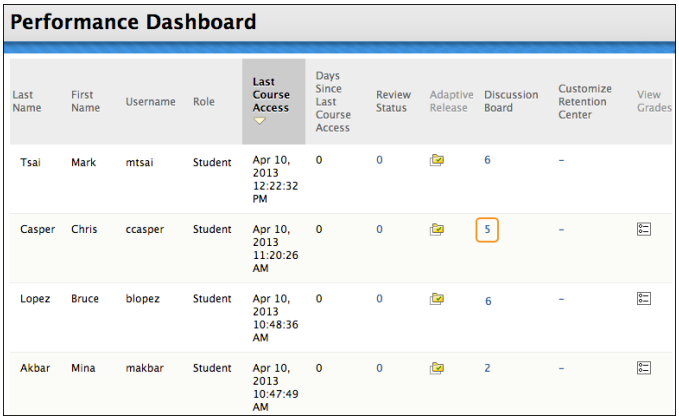
View Discussion Statistics

The Performance Dashboard is a valuable tool you can use to monitor student progress throughout your course. A summary of access and progress for each student appears in a table format. As the term progresses, you can quickly see if students are accessing your course regularly, reviewing course content, and contributing to the discussion board. This information can help you identify students who are outside the normal range of participation or who need help and encouragement. To learn more, see Using the Performance Dashboard.

Note: Your institution controls whether the Performance Dashboard is available. Your institution can also disable the discussion board tool, which will affect the information appearing in the Performance Dashboard.

How to View Discussion Statistics

1. On the **Control Panel**, expand the **Evaluation** section and select **Performance Dashboard**.
2. On the **Performance Dashboard** page, you can view how many forums a user posted in. In the **Discussion Board** column, click a numbered link to view details.



Performance Dashboard

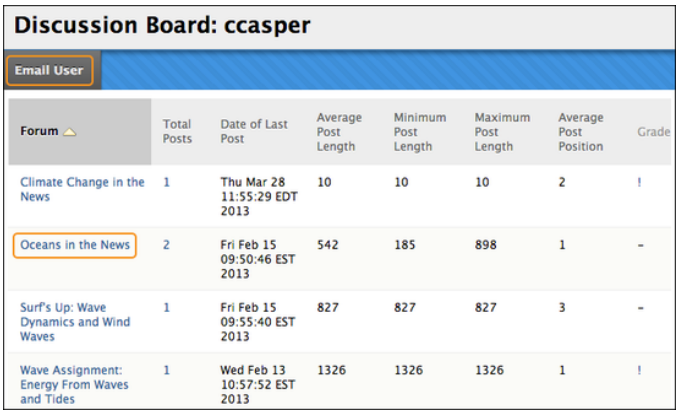
Last Name	First Name	Username	Role	Last Course Access	Days Since Last Course Access	Review Status	Adaptive Release	Discussion Board	Customize Retention Center	View Grades
Tsai	Mark	mtsai	Student	Apr 10, 2013 12:22:32 PM	0	0		6	-	
Casper	Chris	ccasper	Student	Apr 10, 2013 11:20:26 AM	0	0		5	-	
Lopez	Bruce	blopez	Student	Apr 10, 2013 10:48:36 AM	0	0		6	-	
Akbar	Mina	makbar	Student	Apr 10, 2013 10:47:49 AM	0	0		2	-	

3. On the **Discussion Board** page, you can view the following information:

   Note: To sort a column, click the column heading or caret.

   - **Forum**: Lists all the forums a user has posted in.
   - **Total Posts**: Click the link to access a page displaying a user's posts in that forum.
   - **Date of Last Post**: View when a user last accessed the forum.
   - **Average Post Length**: Lists the average post length, in number of characters.
   - **Minimum Post Length**: Lists the minimum post length, in number of characters.
   - **Maximum Post Length**: Lists the maximum post length, in number of characters.
   - **Average Post Position**: View a representation of a user's participation within the threads.
   - **Grade**: Click the link in the column to access the Grade Center column (if a grade appears).

4. On the action bar, click **Email User** to contact a user. The system populates the **Email Forum User** page with the **To** and **From** information.
5. In the **Forum** column, click a forum title to access a collection page displaying all a user's posts in that forum.



Discussion Board: ccasper

Email User

Forum	Total Posts	Date of Last Post	Average Post Length	Minimum Post Length	Maximum Post Length	Average Post Position	Grade
Climate Change in the News	1	Thu Mar 28 11:55:29 EDT 2013	10	10	10	2	!
Oceans in the News	2	Fri Feb 15 09:50:46 EST 2013	542	185	898	1	-
Surf's Up: Wave Dynamics and Wind Waves	1	Fri Feb 15 09:55:40 EST 2013	827	827	827	3	-
Wave Assignment: Energy From Waves and Tides	1	Wed Feb 13 10:57:52 EST 2013	1326	1326	1326	1	!

Create Group Discussions

You can create formal groups of students to collaborate on course work, and provide each group with its own group area. You can include links to group tools to help students collaborate and communicate. For example, you can create a special group discussion board, available only to the members of a course group.

Group discussion boards are separate from the regular course discussion board, which is available to all course members. Members of a group can create and manage their own forums. To learn about creating course groups, see Creating Groups.

Example:

You assign students to groups, providing each group with a problem or situation to explore and develop into a class presentation. The groups can use the chat tool and their group discussion boards to come to consensus about topic choices. They can also use their group discussion boards to post internet source links, and then members can post replies on their value. Also, they can use the group discussion board to divide up tasks and refine the outline. Members post portions of the presentation, and all members post replies regarding usefulness, grammar, flow, and for agreement on the final product.

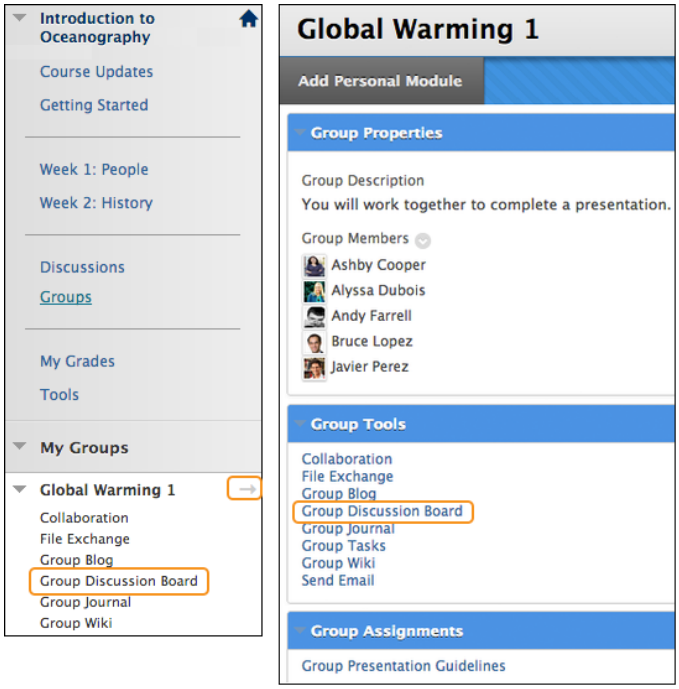
Note: Your institution controls whether this tool is available.

How to Enable Group Discussions

When you create a course group, select the discussion board tool to help groups collaborate and communicate.

1. On the **Create Group** page, in the **Tool Availability** section, select the check box for **Discussion Board**.
2. Click **Submit**.

The **Group Discussion Board** tool appears in the **My Groups** section and on the group homepage.



How to Make Group Discussions Unavailable

You cannot delete a group discussion board without deleting the group, but you can make the tool unavailable. Any existing posts are not removed—just made unavailable until you make the group discussion board available again.

Note: When you make a graded group discussion board unavailable, the grade column associated with that group discussion board remains in the Grade Center.

1. On the **Control Panel**, expand the **Users and Groups** section and select **Groups**.
2. Change **Edit Mode** to **ON**. On the **Groups** page, access the group's contextual menu.
3. Select **Edit**.
4. On the **Edit Group** page, in the **Tool Availability** section, clear the check box for **Discussion Board**.
5. Click **Submit**.

When members access their group homepage or the **My Groups** section, the link to the group discussion board no longer appears. You may make the tool available again at any time.

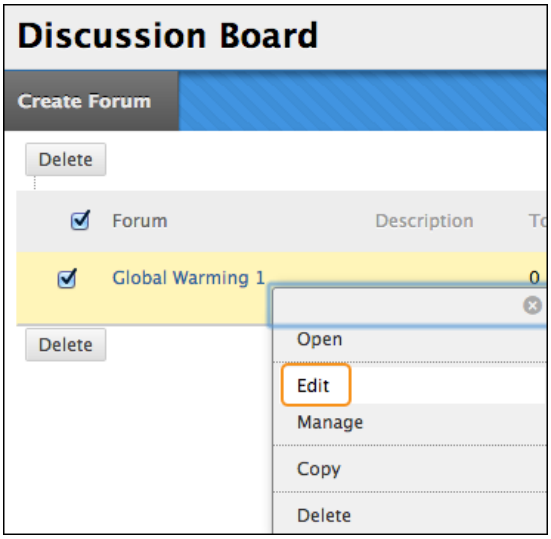
How to Edit the Settings for Group Discussions

Each new group discussion board contains a default forum titled with the group's name. You and all assigned group member can edit the forum name and provide a description.

Note: If you want to grade participation in a group discussion board, you can edit a forum's settings and enable grading in the forum or threads. Unlike other graded group activities, when a group

discussion board is set to graded, each member is graded independently of other group members. Each group member must make the designated number of posts to earn his or her own grade.

1. On the **Control Panel**, expand the **Course Tools** section and select **Discussion Board**.
2. On the **Discussion Board** page, the course discussion board and all group discussion boards appear. Click a group discussion board link.
3. On the next **Discussion Board** page, access the forum's contextual menu.
4. Select **Edit**.



5. On the **Edit Forum** page, change the **Name**, provide a **Description**, and edit the **Forum Availability** and **Forum Settings**. If you want to grade the group's posts, you can enable grading for the forum or threads and type the **Points possible**. To learn more, see How to Create Forums.

If you provided a description, it appears in the **Description** column on the group discussion board page.

You or any group member can create more forums.