Blackboard Help

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**Discussion Board**

*Note:* Your instructor and institution control which tools are available. If this tool is not available, your instructor or institution may have disabled it.

The discussion board is a tool for sharing thoughts and ideas about class materials. Course members can replicate the robust discussions that take place in the traditional classroom. An advantage of using the discussion board is its asynchronous nature. Participants do not need to be in the same location or time zone, and can take time to consider their responses carefully.

You can use the discussion board to:

- Meet with your peers for collaboration and social interaction.
- Pose questions about homework assignments, readings, and course content.
- Demonstrate the understanding or application of course material.

**How to Access the Discussion Board**

1. On the course menu, click **Discussions**.
   - OR -
   On the course menu, click **Tools** and select **Discussion Board**.

2. The main **Discussion Board** page appears with a list of available discussion forums. A forum is an area where users discuss a topic or a group of related topics.
The Main Discussion Board Page

1. Click a forum title to view the messages. Forums containing unread posts appear in bold.
2. View data on the number of posts and participants.
3. Click the number in the **Unread Posts** column for one-click access to a forum’s unread messages.

Course groups can have their own discussion boards. Group discussion boards are available only to users who are members of the group. If a group discussion board is available, access it from the groups link on the course menu or in the **My Groups** area.

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About Forums

Within each forum, users can create multiple threads. A thread includes the initial post and any replies to it. When creating a forum, your instructor has the option of allowing or not allowing you to start threads.

The Forum Page

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, accessing grading information, 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 marking as read.
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.

If your instructor enabled subscribing, you can be alerted by email when new posts are made. Your instructor chooses whether the alerts are for posts made at the forum or thread level.

When the forum email subscription feature is enabled, you will see Subscribe on the action bar. Once you click it, you will receive emails when new posts are made to the forum.

When the thread email subscription feature is enabled, select one or more thread check boxes and select Subscribe from the Thread Actions drop-down list. Once you select Subscribe, you will receive emails when new posts are made to the selected threads.
List View and Tree View

After you click a forum title, a page loads displaying all forum threads. You can view the page in either List View or Tree View. This choice remains in effect until you change it and you may change it at any time. On the forum page, in the upper-right corner, toggle between the two views.

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 search posts. If your instructor has allowed you to receive email alerts to new posts in the forum, you will also see Subscribe.
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.
- Subscribing or unsubscribing for email alerts to new posts made to 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 or collect posts.

You can expand and collapse threads by using 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** options to hide or view all posts included in all threads.

Select 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.
About Threads

When you view the thread page, all posts and the forum description appear on one page. Forum descriptions are often used as prompts for discussion, so they are now visible where you 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.

The Thread 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.

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 your instructor 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**.
How to Create Threads in a Forum

Forum settings control who can post, and what other types of actions you can take, such as editing your own threads, posting anonymously, or rating posts. Depending on which forum settings your instructor has selected, you may be allowed to create a new thread.

1. Access a discussion forum and click **Create Thread** on the action bar.

2. On the **Create Thread** page, you can view the forum description to refer as you write your response. Type a **Subject** and **Message**. You can use the content editor functions to format the text and add files, images, web links, multimedia, and mashups.

3. 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**.
   - If your institution licenses content management, click **Browse Content Collection**.

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

*Note:* If your instructor has associated a rubric with the discussion forum or thread and made it available to students, you can view grading criteria before beginning work. Click **Grading Information** to access the forum or thread's **Grade** page. Click **View Rubric**.

### 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, you can rate, filter, sort, and collect posts. To learn more, see Search and Collect Posts.

How to Reply to Discussion Posts

You can reply to published threads, but cannot reply to locked or hidden threads.

1. Access a forum and select a thread.
2. On the thread 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 Quote 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 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.
   ◦ 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.

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.

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

How to Rate Discussion Posts

If allowed by your instructor, you can rate posts. Rating posts allows users to focus on messages considered especially informative or useful by others. 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. Instructors can also rate posts.

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.
Search and Collect Posts

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.
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**: Tags are text labels that act like bookmarks. Only your instructor can enable the tag function and add tags to posts to help group similar messages together. For example, if the subject of scientific notation is discussed often, your instructor can tag each of the posts on this topic. You can read, filter, and search messages using these tags, but you cannot create tags. You can Show All tags or select a tag.

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:
   - **Author's Last Name**
   - **Author's First Name**
   - **Subject**
   - **Date of Last Post**
   - **Thread Order**

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

3. On the action bar, point to **Order** to access the drop-down list.
4. Sort posts in ascending or descending order.
Manage Discussions

You can determine which threads you see in a forum. If allowed by your instructor, you may also be able to edit and delete your posts.

How to Change the Displayed Threads

Your instructor sets the thread status as published, hidden, or draft, but you can choose which type of threads appear in a forum. By default, published threads appear.

1. On the forum page, select **List View**.
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.
   - **Show All**: All types of threads appear in the forum.
   - **Published**: A post with a published status is available to users.
   - **Hidden**: A thread that is locked and not visible by default. You may choose to display hidden threads in list view. You cannot edit hidden threads, even if editing is enabled for the thread. Hiding threads helps you find relevant content, as unneeded content is hidden from view.
   - **Draft**: A draft thread is saved by the author for future editing, but is not submitted for publication. When published, other users can view it. Users can only view their own drafts and must access them from the **Display** drop-down list.

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

How to Edit or Delete Discussion Posts

*Note:* You can edit or delete your own posts only if your instructor has made those options available to you. You cannot edit or delete others' posts. If you post a message in error and the option to delete it is not available to you, contact your instructor.

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** or **Delete**. The delete action is irreversible. Your instructor determines if you can delete just your post or your post with all replies. If you are allowed to delete your post with replies, all posts are permanently deleted.
4. When editing, 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.
View Discussion Grades

You can view your grades for your discussion contributions in My Grades. The discussion grade row can contain a symbol indicating its status, such as an exclamation mark indicating it needs grading. Or, if your post has been graded, the grade appears. To learn more, see My Grades

1. On the course menu, click Tools.
2. On the Tools page, select My Grades.
3. On the My Grades page, to view more detail, click the link to see the post's Grade Forum page.

This page includes:

- **Forum Statistics**: This section shows information about your posts, such as Total Posts, Date of Last Post, Average Post Length, and Average Post Position.

- **Forum Grade**: This section provides information about your grade and any instructor's feedback. If your instructor used a rubric for grading, click View Rubric to display detailed grading information.

- **Contributors**: This section shows other users who participated in the forum.
Moderate Forums

In a discussion forum, your instructor 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.

Occasionally, participants may introduce material to the discussion board that is inappropriate for the class discussion. Depending on the maturity and the sensitivity of the participants in your course, it may be necessary to review participant posts for inappropriate content before sharing posts with the rest of the class.

In a moderated forum, all posts to the forum are added to a moderation queue. A 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.

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

How to Moderate a Forum

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. On the Moderate Post page, read the post and select the Publish or Return option. Published messages are immediately posted to the thread.

4. Optionally, type feedback in the text box. You can use the content editor functions to format the text, link to files in 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.

5. 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.

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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.
Discussion FAQs

Why Can't I See My Discussion Post?

If you have composed a post and do not see it, you should:

- Check if you accidentally saved it as a draft. Return to the forum page and point to Display to access the drop-down list. Select Drafts.
- Click Search at the top of the main discussion board, forum, or thread pages and search for a term you used in your lost message.

Tip: When composing long messages, write them offline in a word processing or notepad program that you can save locally. Then, paste the message into discussions. This can provide you with peace of mind as well as a way to recover your work in case of technical difficulties.

What Does Subscribe Mean?

If your instructor enabled subscribing, you can be alerted by email when new posts are made. Your instructor chooses whether the alerts are for posts made at the forum or thread level.

When the forum email subscription feature is enabled, you will see Subscribe on the action bar. Once you click it, you will receive emails when new posts are made to the forum.

When the thread email subscription feature is enabled, select one or more thread check boxes and select Subscribe from the Thread Actions drop-down list. Once you select Subscribe, you will receive emails when new posts are made to the selected threads.