Forum Manual

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Forum

Forum activities can contribute significantly to successful communication, discussion, and community building in an online environment. There are two types of forums: **News forum** and **General forum**.

a) News forum

The News forum is a special type of forum that only teachers can post in.

b) General forums

These forums are designed for students to collaborate and share thoughts on a particular topic or theme.

1. To create a forum:

1. From the course homepage, select the **Turn editing on** button.
2. In the desired week/topic, select the **Add an activity or resource** link.
3. From the list of available options, select **Forum**.
4. Select the **Add** button.
5. A settings page will appear.

6. Enter the desired title of the forum in the **Forum name** field.
7. Enter your instructions for students in the **Description** field. This should include any directions, objectives, etc. that students should take into account when completing the assignment.
8. Select or unselect the options for **Display description on course page** and **Display recent posts on course page** based on your preferences. Some users find that including this information both in the forum *and* on the course page creates unwanted visual clutter on the course page and therefore elect to uncheck those features.

9. **Forum Type** – There are five types of forums to choose from. Select the type most appropriate for the activity:
   1. **A single simple discussion** – A single discussion topic which everyone can reply to. This works best for short focused discussions. The first post will be what you enter in the forum introduction.
   2. **Each person posts one discussion** – Each student can post exactly one new discussion topic, which everyone can then reply to. This is useful when you want each student to start a discussion topic.
   3. **Q and A forum** – Students must first post their perspectives before viewing other students' posts; this encourages independent thought. **Note**: Be sure not to post the question in the forum description but rather start a new question that students reply to.
   4. **Standard forum displayed in a blog-like format** – An open forum where anyone can start a new discussion topic at any time and in which discussion topics are displayed on one page with "Discuss this topic" links leading to replies.
   5. **Standard forum for general use** – An open forum where anyone can start a new discussion topic at any time. As the name suggests, this is the most common type of forum used for general class discussion.
10. **Post options:** Select additional options as desired, to assist you when reviewing student posts. For example, you may wish to select **Allow private replies**, which will enable you to reply to a student in the forum without other students seeing the post. Additionally, you may wish to **Display word count**, which will show the word count of each post, if the length of the post is a factor in your grading.
11. **Attachments**: **Maximum attachment size** and **Maximum number of attachments** – If needed, you may limit the size and number of attachments a user may add to their forum post.
12. **Subscription mode** – If a participant is subscribed to a forum, they will receive email copies of forum posts. There are multiple subscription mode options:
    1. **Optional** Subscription – Participants can choose whether to be subscribed. **Note: Optional subscription** is the recommended setting.
    2. **Forced** subscription – Everyone is subscribed and cannot unsubscribe
    3. **Auto** subscription – Everyone is subscribed initially but can choose to unsubscribe at any time.
    4. **Subscription disabled** – Subscriptions are not allowed.
13. **Post Threshold for blocking** – this group of settings is rarely used and can generally be ignored and set to **Don't block**. Change this only if you wish to block users from posting after a given number of posts in a given period, and as they approach that number, they'll be warned that they are approaching the threshold. Setting the warn threshold to 0 will disable warnings, and setting the block threshold to 0 will disable blocking. If blocking is disabled, warnings will automatically be disabled. (None of these settings affect a teacher posting.)
14. **Grade** – If this will be a graded forum activity, choose the **Grade Type** you wish to use: **Manual** or **Rating.** Select **Rating** if you wish to rate the quality of posts on a numerical scale inside the forum activity. Under **Grade,** assign the **Maximum points** the entire forum assignment can receive. (For example, if students must do 3 posts in the forum, worth up to 10 points each, you would put 30 as the maximum points.) You set up grade categories in advance, you can assign forum to a designated grade category.
15. **Ratings** enable the teacher to rate forum posts. The ratings then push to the gradebook. **Aggregate Type** defines how ratings are combined to form the final grade in the gradebook:
    1. **Average of ratings** – The mean of all ratings given to posts in that forum.
    2. **Count of ratings** – The number of rated items becomes the final grade. Note: The total cannot exceed the maximum grade for the activity.

3. **Maximum rating** – The highest rating becomes the final grade.
4. **Minimum rating** – The lowest rating becomes the final grade.
5. **Sum of ratings** – All the ratings for a user are added together. **Note**: The total cannot exceed the maximum grade for the activity.

16. **Restrict ratings to items with dates in this range** – Enter a date range where only posts in that date range can be rated. **Note:** This does not restrict users from posting to the forum in this range; only that posts in the range can be rated.

17. Select the **Save and display** button to go to the newly created forum or **Save and return to course** button to return to the course homepage.

2. After creating the forum, you may create a new discussion:

1. Select the **Add a new discussion** topic button.
2. Enter a **Subject** (title) into the corresponding field.

3. In the **Message** field, enter a more detailed message. Use the toolbar to format the text; just as you would in Microsoft Word. **Note:** Advanced formatting features are available by selecting **Use advanced editor.** However, selecting **Use advanced editor** will erase any text you have already entered into the **Message** field, so select this option *before* starting your text if you wish to use the advanced features.
4. If subscriptions are enabled for the forum, you may choose to subscribe and receive email updates in the **Subscription** drop-down menu.
5. If attachments are enabled for the forum, you may attach a file by selecting the **Add** link, and search for/upload the file you want to attach OR drag-and-drop the file into the corresponding box.
6. **Mail Now** – If you check the **Mail Now** box, your post is added to the queue to email the subscribers. If you do not check this box, you will have 30 minutes to edit your post before it is added to the queue. **Note:** All queued message are usually delivered to subscribers within 2 to 3 hours.
7. Select the **Post to forum** button to complete your post.

Within a forum, threads/posts are organized by when they were last modified. This means that if a user posts to an older thread, it will jump up to the top of the thread list.