Discussion Board

Building a sense of community among students is crucial for a successful online experience. The discussion board provides a space and medium for asynchronous interactions to occur among students, allowing them to replicate the robust discussions that take place in the traditional classroom.

Accessing the Discussion Board

You can access the discussion board in several ways.
1. On the course menu, create a tool link to the discussion board for quick, direct access.
   - To create this link:
     1. Change Edit Mode to ON and point to the plus (+) sign above the course menu.
     2. The Add Menu Item dropdown list will appear.
     3. Select Tool Link.
     4. Type a Name for the link, select Discussion Board from the Type dropdown list, and select the Available to Users checkbox.
     5. Click Submit.
2. On the course menu, click the default Tools link. On the Tools page, select Discussion Board.
3. On the Control Panel, expand the Course Tools section and select Discussion Board.

Creating 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, each including the initial post and all replies to it.

1. Access the Discussion Board page using one of the three methods listed above.
2. Click Create Forum on the action bar.
3. On the Create Forum page, type a Name and include instructions or a description in the Description box.
4. In the Forum Availability section, select Yes to make the forum available to users. Note: You can create forums ahead of time and set availability to No until you would like the discussion to start.
5. The **Enter Date** and **Time Restrictions** fields can be used to designate when the forum should be displayed.
6. Select **Forum Setting** based on your specific needs, including grading information and the ability for students to subscribe to email alerts or new posts.
7. Click **Submit**.

The new forum will appear at the bottom of the list on the **Discussion Board** page, but you may reorder this list using drag-and-drop functionality.

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**Developing Successful Online Discussions**

Participation and interaction in the discussion board does not occur naturally, but must be intentionally designed into your courses.

Below are best practices for developing successful online discussions:

- Define participation requirements, clearly communicating your expectations, proper online etiquette and grading rubrics.
- Craft discussion questions carefully to promote critical thinking and encourage productive discussions. Avoiding questions with yes or no answers and incorporating multimedia resources into your questions help promote thought and research.
- Encourage new and contrasting ideas. Assign different groups to support opposite sides of an issue to avoid too much agreement and foster health debate.
- Moderate to encourage engaging, quality discussion. Establish your presence by asking for clarification, resources or input from silent participants.

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