

### Basics: Discussions

You can use the **Discussions** tool to help develop a community of learners in your course. Instructors and students interact with one another by posting messages to discussion topics, reading messages, and replying to messages posted by others.

Examples of possible discussions:

- Encourage users to share their reflections on course material with their peers
- Set up an area for students to ask questions
- Pose a question for the class to debate
- Discuss an assignment
- Create areas for students to work on group assignments

#### Discussion Example

Forums & Topics List	
Forums & Topics List   New Forum   New Topic   Copy   Re-Order   Delete	
Display: All Forums and Topics [v] Apply	
Title	Actions
<a href="#">Week 1 Discussion</a> Each week you will have two questions to discuss. Please post your initial response by Thursday night, and respond to at least one of your classmates by Sunday night.	
<a href="#">Question 1</a> 0 messages - 0 unread Please summarize the advantages of the strategy discussed in Chapter 1, and give a personal example of how you have applied, or could apply it to your current situation.	

In this tutorial, you will:

- Create a discussion Forum and Topic
- Set Availability and Locking Options
- Edit and Delete a Forum and Topic
- Reorder Forums and Topics
- Move a Topic to another Forum
- Post, Open, Reply to and Edit Messages


### Forums & Topics

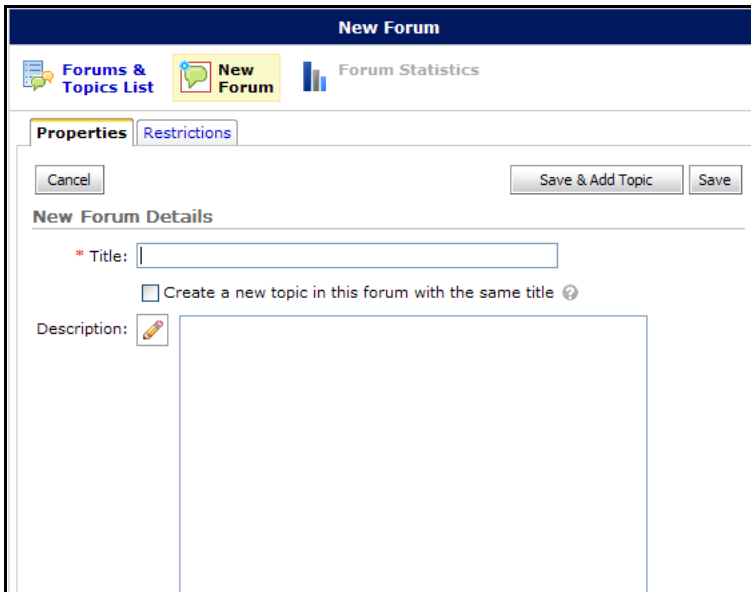
**Forums** are used as **headings** to organize your discussion topics. You can include a description or instructions for each forum.

**Topics** are the **links** to where the discussions actually take place (i.e., where users post and read messages). For each topic, you can include a description that defines the purpose of the topic and guides the conversation. In the image above, the **Forum** is “Week 1 Discussion.” The **Topic** is “Question 1.”

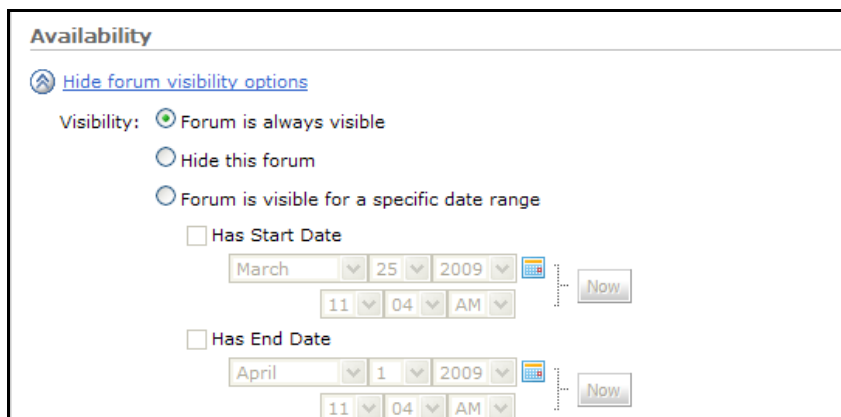
**NOTE:** Each topic **must** belong to a forum. If you create a forum without a topic, it will not be visible to students.

## Create a Discussion Forum

1. On the main discussions page, click  **New Forum** on the top tool menu.
2. Enter a **Title** for the forum.
3. [Optional] Enter a **Description**.



4. Under the **Availability** section, Click **Show forum visibility options**, if hidden.
5. You have three options under **Visibility**: **Forum is always visible**, **Hide this forum**, or **Forum is visible for a specific date range**.  
**NOTE:** Hidden forums will not be visible to students. In addition, all topics in the forum will be hidden.
6. Make your selection by clicking the radio button next to the appropriate option. If you wish to specify a date range, adjust the start and end dates.





7. Under the **Locking Options** section, Click **Show locking options**, if hidden.
8. You have three locking options: **Unlock the forum**, **Lock forum**, and **Unlock forum for a specific date range**.

**NOTE:** When a forum is locked, it is still visible to students; however, students can no longer post messages to any of the topics in the forum.


9. Make your selection by clicking the radio button next to the appropriate option. If you wish to specify a date range, adjust the start and end dates.
10. Click **Save** to save the forum, or **Save & Add Topic** to save the forum and create a new topic within it.

## Create a Discussion Topic

1. On the main discussion page, click the  **New Topic** icon on the top tool menu. **NOTE:** You can also click the  **New Topic** icon to the right of the forum in which you want to create the topic.
2. In the **Forum** drop-down list, select the forum in which you want to create the topic.
3. Enter a **Title** for the topic.
4. [Optional] Enter a **Description**.


5. Set **Availability** and **Locking Options** for the topic (as described above).
6. Click **Save** to save the topic, or **Save and New** to save the topic and create another topic.

## Edit a Forum or Topic

1. On the main discussions page, click the  **Edit** icon for the forum or topic you want to edit.
2. Select the tab containing the information you want to edit.
3. Make your changes.
4. Click **Save**.


## Delete a Forum or Topic


**NOTE:** Deleting forums/topics will permanently delete any messages posted by your students to that forum/topic and any associated grades. If you delete a forum, you will also delete all topics in the forum.

1. On the main discussions page, click  **Delete** on the top tool menu.
2. Select the forums and/or topics you want to delete.
3. Click the **Delete Selected** button.

## Re-order Forums and Topics

You can change the order in which forums are listed on the main discussions page, and the order in which topics are listed inside each forum.


1. On the main discussions page, click the  **Re-Order** icon on the top tool menu.
2. From the drop-down list in the **Sort Order** column, select the position in the list where you want each forum or topic to appear.

**NOTE:** Forums are ordered relative to each other; topics are ordered within each forum. If the topics in a forum are not visible, click the  **Expand** icon next to the forum, or click **Expand All** at the top of the list.


3. Click **Save**.

## Move a Topic to another Forum

If you want to move a topic from one forum to another, you need to edit the topic.

1. Click the  **Edit** icon for the topic you want to move.
2. Select a new forum from the **Forum** drop-down list on the **Properties** tab.
3. Click **Save**. Your topic will appear under the selected forum.


## Post a New Message

1. Click on the appropriate topic link.
2. Click the  **Compose** icon on the top tool menu.
3. In the Compose box, type an appropriate **Subject**.
4. Type your message in the **Message** box.
5. Click the **Post** button (bottom right) to send the message.

## Open a Message

To view a message, first click on the topic link. Then click on the **Subject** line (link) of the particular message. The message will be displayed in a preview pane at the bottom of the window.


## Reply to a Message

1. Click the **Subject** line (link) of the message you want to reply to.
2. In the View Message pane (bottom half of screen), click the  **Reply** icon on the tool menu.
3. Type your reply in the **Message** area of the Reply pane.
4. Click the **Post** button

## Edit a Message

Editing a message allows you to change the subject or message text, and add or remove attachments.

**NOTE:** You can only edit your own messages.

1. Open the message and click the  **Edit Message** icon on the tool menu.
2. Make your changes.
3. Click **Save**.


## Beyond the Basics: Discussions





Now that you know the basics about the **Discussions** tool, you are ready to learn advanced skills such as copying forums and topics, changing your viewing options, viewing discussion statistics, and assessing topics.

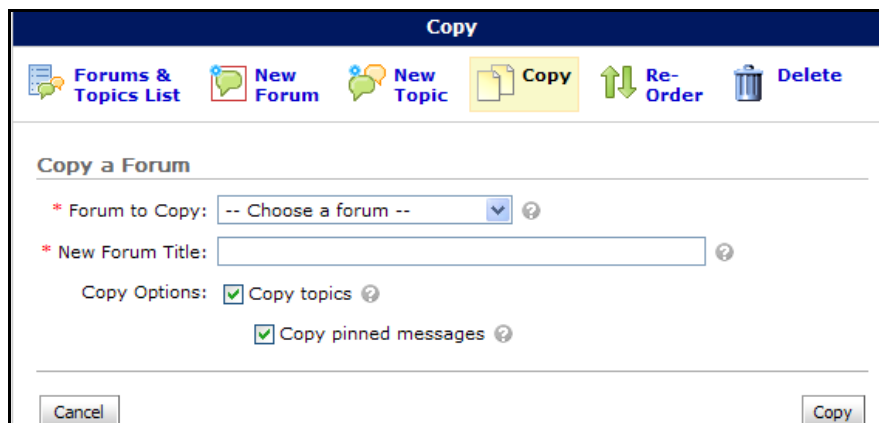
In this part of the tutorial, you will:


- Copy a discussion Forum and Topic
- Create an Assessment for a Topic
- Use “View” Message Options
- View Messages by an Individual Student
- View Discussion Statistics
- Assess a Topic
- Copy a Message to another Forum

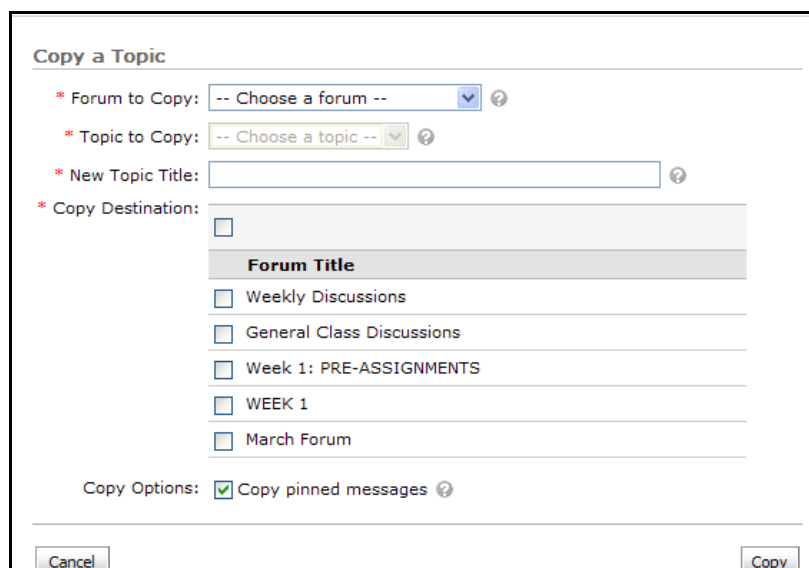
### Copy a Discussion Forum and Topic

If you have already created a discussion forum or topic and you want to create a similar item, you can use the  **Copy** tool.

1. In the **Discussions** area, click on the  **Copy** button at the top of the screen.
2. Choose  **Copy a Forum**, or  **Copy a topic**.
3. To  **Copy a Forum**:
  - a. Select the **Forum to Copy** from the dropdown list.
  - b. Modify the **New Forum Title**.
  - c. **[Optional]**: Select **Copy topics**. Checking this option will copy all of the topics created within the forum, in addition to the forum itself.
  - d. **[Optional]**: Select **Copy pinned messages**. Checking this option will copy all **pinned** messages.
  - e. Click **Copy**.





4. To  **Copy a Topic:**
  - a. Select the **Forum to Copy** from the dropdown list.
  - b. Select the **Topic to Copy** from the dropdown list.
  - c. Modify the **New Topic Title**.
  - d. Under **Copy Destination**, select one or more of the **Forum Titles**.
  - e. **[Optional]:** Select **Copy pinned messages**. Checking this option will copy all **pinned** messages.
  - f. Click **Copy**.



## Create an Assessment for a Topic

If you plan to give students grades for participation, you can use the assessment tool in **Discussions**. Each post can be evaluated individually or, you can assess the topic as a whole. When evaluating student posts, you can send a grade directly to the **Grades** area.

First, set up a grade item for the discussion topic in the **Grades** area.

1. Click on **Grades**.
2. Click on  **Manage Grades** in the left sidebar.
3. Click on  **New Item**.
4. Click **Numeric**.
5. Enter an appropriate **Name**.
6. Enter a **Short Name**. (This will reduce horizontal scrolling in the **Grades** area).
7. Enter the **Max. Points** for the discussion topic.
8. Click on **Show Display Options**, if hidden.
9. Uncheck **Display class average** and **Display grade distribution** to users.
10. Click **Save**.

**Properties** Restrictions

Cancel Save and New Save

**General**

Type: Numeric

\* Name:

Short Name:  ?

Category: None

Show Description

**Grading**

\* Max. Points: 4  ?

Can Exceed:  ?

Bonus:  ?



Grade Scheme: -- Default Scheme -- (Percentage)

**Display Options**

Show Display Options

Cancel Save and New Save

Next, you will set up the assessment option in the discussion topic.

1. Click on **Discussions**.
2. Click on the  **Edit topic** icon for the discussion topic you wish to assess.
3. Click on the **Assessment** tab.
4. Under **Grade Item**, choose an item from the dropdown list.
5. Enter the **"Score out of"** (total points possible for this topic). This should be the same score you entered when you created the grade item.
6. You have two options for assessing messages:
  - a. If you wish to look at all of a student's posts and then assign **one grade to the Topic**, you are finished, skip to step 7.
  - b. If you wish to **score each individual post** and have the topic score calculated, click the box next to **"Messages,"** and then select a **Calculation** method (i.e. average, minimum, maximum)
7. Click **Save**. **NOTE:** you will see a  ruler icon for the topic that indicates this topic can be assessed.

**Assessment**

Grade Item: Week 1 Discussion  ?

Score Out of: 4  ?

Messages:  Assess each message and automatically calculate the topic score ?

Calculation: -- Select a calculation method --

Include unassessed messages in the calculated score as zero ?

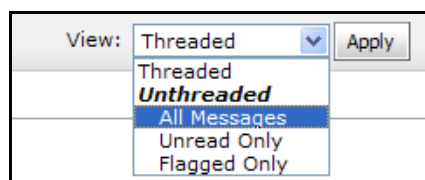
Cancel Save

## Use “View” Message Options (Practice)

There are many ways to view messages in D2L. Most of the time, you will want to view messages in the “**Threaded**” style, which is the default setting. Threaded discussions begin with an original posting, with all replies to the post appearing underneath in a hierarchical manner (see image below).

	Subject	Authored By	Date
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Glad to meet all of you!</a>	Beth Jensen	Mar 17, 2009 11:46 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Hello</a>	Trainee2 BSU	Mar 16, 2009 10:31 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Re: Hello</a>	Beth Jensen	Mar 17, 2009 11:49 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Re: Hello</a>	Beth Jensen	Mar 20, 2009 9:26 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Re: Hello</a>	Trainee1 BSU	Mar 20, 2009 9:27 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Intro</a>	Trainee1 BSU	Mar 16, 2009 10:20 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Re: Intro</a>	Trainee2 BSU	Mar 16, 2009 10:32 AM

To change how messages are viewed, use the dropdown menu on the upper-right hand corner of the screen. Make your selection, and then click **Apply**.



**Threaded:** Use the **Threaded** view if you want to keep original posts and replies together in a hierarchical structure. Using this view, you can sort the messages by date only.

**Unthreaded:**

- **All Messages:** Use this view if you wish to sort the messages by Author, Subject or Date (i.e. to sort by student, click on the heading “**Authored By**”).

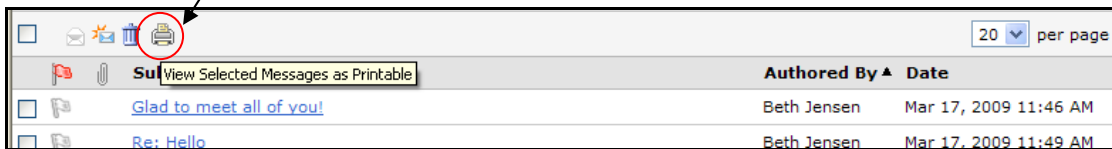
	Subject	Authored By	Date
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Glad to meet all of you!</a>	Beth Jensen	Mar 17, 2009 11:46 AM
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- **Unread Only:** Use this view if you wish to quickly read **Unread** messages.
- **Flagged Only:** Use this view if you wish to quickly find **Flagged** messages.

## View Messages by an Individual Student (Practice)



If you are using discussion participation as a graded part of student assessment, you may want to view all of the messages an individual student has posted for a particular topic. Then, you can read all responses to the topic at once and determine a grade. To view all of an individual student’s posts for a discussion topic:

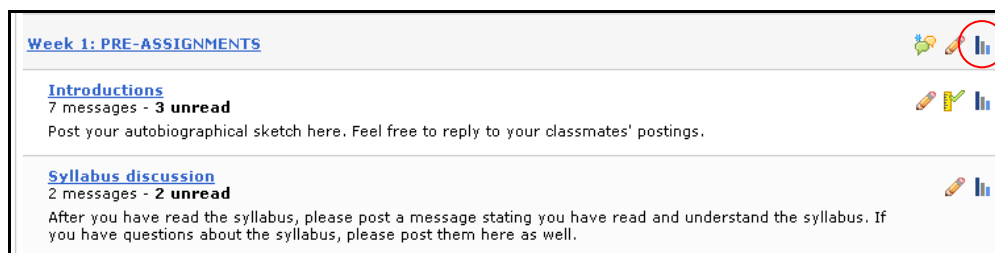
1. Change your "View" messages option to **Unthreaded: All Messages**, then click **Apply**.
2. Click on the heading "**Authored By,**" to sort messages by student's last names.
3. Click in the boxes on the left side of each message the student has authored.
4. Click the **View Selected Messages as Printable** button. A window will pop-up containing all of the messages that student authored.
5. [Optional] Click **Print** for a copy of the messages.



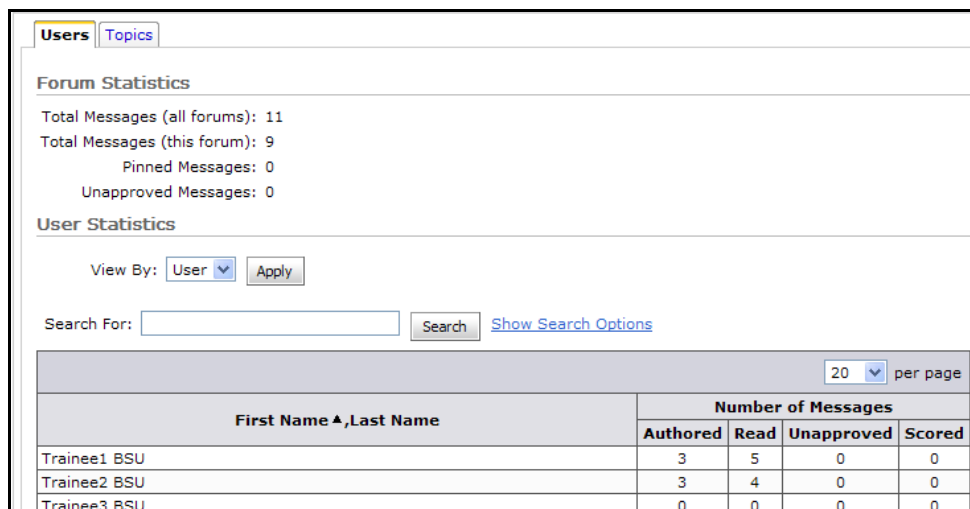
## Viewing Discussion Statistics (Practice)

If you would like a quick summary of the activity in the **Discussions** area, use the statistics tool.

1. Click on the  Statistics icon in the left sidebar to see an overall summary of **all** Forums and Topics.
2. To see statistics for specific Forums or Topics, Click the  Statistics icon next to the **Forum** or **Topic** you wish to view.



3. If you view **Forum** statistics, you can choose to see a summary of activity in the Forum by **User** or by **Topic** by clicking on the corresponding tab.



4. If you view **Topic** statistics, you will see message totals by Forum and Topic, as well as details on how many messages each student has authored and read.

**Topic Statistics**

Total Messages (all forums): 11  
 Total Messages (this forum): 9  
 Total Messages (this topic): 7  
 Pinned Messages: 0  
 Unapproved Messages: 0

**User Statistics**

View By:


Search For:   [Show Search Options](#)

20 per page

First Name ▲, Last Name	Number of Messages			
	Authored	Read	Unapproved	Scored
Trainee1 BSU	2	4	0	0
Trainee2 BSU	2	3	0	0
Trainee3 BSU	0	0	0	0

## Assess a Topic (Practice)

To enter scores for a discussion topic:


1. Click on **Discussions**.
2. Click on the  Assessment ruler next to the topic you wish to assess.
3. Click on the **Topic Score** link for a student.
4. View all of the messages in the topic.
5. Enter a **Topic Score** at the top of the page. **Or**, if you are grading posts individually, enter scores for each post.
6. Click the box next to **Graded** (this will send the score to the gradebook).
7. Click **Save**, and continue with the next student.

**View Topic Score - Trainee1 BSU**

**Topic Score Details**

Forum: Weekly Discussions  
 Topic: Week 1, Question 1  
 User: Trainee1 BSU  
 Messages: 0 message(s) posted by this user


Topic Score:  / 4

Graded 

Sort By:

## Copy a Message to another Forum (Practice)

If you would like to copy or move a message to another Forum, use the copy tool.

1. Click on the **message** you wish to copy
2. Click on the  **Copy** icon at the top of the page.
3. Under **Destination Forum**, select the Forum you wish to move the message to.
4. Under **Copy Options**, select **Copy Message replies** and/or **Delete original message after copy completes**.