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To access Discussions, select *Communication* from the course navigation bar and then click on *Discussions*.

Discussions are your course message boards that are organized into **forums** and **topics**.

- **Forums** are the main folder where discussion topics reside. *Students cannot post to forums.*
- **Topics** reside inside a forum. Students post to topics.
- **Threads** are postings within a topic.

Click on **Settings** to choose your layout options.

Click on a topic name to view and reply to messages.
CREATING DISCUSSION FORUMS AND TOPICS

Use forums to organize your discussion topics into categories. Your course can have multiple forums and topics, but you must create a forum before you can create a topic since all topics belong to forums.

CREATE A NEW FORUM

1. On the Discussions List page, click New and then select New Forum from the drop down menu.

2. Enter a Title and select Create a New Topic in this forum and a description if preferred.

3. Select the Create a new topic in this forum with the same title check box to automatically create a topic in the forum with the same name.

4. In the Options section:
   - Select the Allow anonymous posts check box to enable anonymous posting to topics in the forum. Note: You cannot evaluate anonymous posts.
   - Select the A moderator must approve individual posts before they display in the forum check box to require moderators approve posts before they appear in forum topics.
   - Select the Users must start a thread before they can read and reply to other threads in each topic check box if you want students to start a thread before they can read and respond to other threads in each topic.
   - Select Display Forum Description in topics to display forum description AND topic description

5. Select a Visibility option for your forum. Note: If you select Forum is visible for a specific date range, select the Has Start Date and Has End Date check boxes to set your availability. You can also have dates Display in Calendar.

6. Select forum Locking Options:
   - Select Lock forum to lock the forum upon creation.
   - Select Unlock forum for a specific date range to open the forum within a date range.
   - Select the Has Start Date and Has End Date check boxes to set your forum availability.

7. Click Save and Close or Save and Add Topic.

8. Utilize the Restrictions tab to set up release conditions and group/section restrictions.
CREATE A NEW TOPIC

1. On the Discussions List page, click New and then select New Forum from the drop down menu.

2. Select the Forum you want to place your topic in from the drop-down list. Click New Forum if you want to create a new forum for your topic (a popup window will appear for you to complete new forum details).

3. Select Topic Type – Open topic versus Group or Section Topic
4. Enter a Title and Description for your topic.
5. In the Options section:
   - Select the Allow anonymous posts check box to enable anonymous posting to the topic.
     - Note: You cannot evaluate anonymous posts.
   - Select the A moderator must approve individual posts before they display in the forum check box to require moderators approve posts before they appear in the topic.
   - Select the Users must start a thread before they can read and reply to other threads check box if you want students to start a thread before they can read and respond to other threads in the topic.

6. Select a rating scheme from the Rating Scheme drop-down list:
   - No Ratings: Hides all rating controls from students.
   - Five-Star Rating Scheme: Allows students to assign each post a score out of five.
   - Up Vote/Down Vote Rating Scheme: Allows students to push posts up/down in rank.
   - Up Vote Only Rating Scheme: Allows students to push posts upwards in rank.
   - Notes: You can change the rating scheme at any time. Reverting back to a previous used scheme will restore its former ratings.

7. Select a Visibility option for your topic. Note: If you select Topic is visible for a specific date range, select the Has Start Date and Has End Date check boxes to set your availability. You can also have dates Display in Calendar.
8. Select **Locking Options**:
   - Select **Lock topic** to lock the forum when it is created. It remains locked until you select **Unlock topic**.
   - Select **Unlock topic** for a specific date range to open the topic within a date range.
     - Select the Has Start Date and Has End Date check boxes to set your topic availability.
9. Click **Save and Close** or **Save and New**.
10. Utilize the **Restrictions tab** to set up release conditions and group/section restrictions.
11. Utilize the **Assessment tab** to associate the topic grade item to the grade book, enter a score out of, add a rubric and allow assessment of individual posts.
As an instructor, you can restrict access to forums and topics in four ways:

- Hiding a discussion forum or topic
- Locking a discussion forum or topic (creating a “read only”) view
- Setting release conditions for a discussion forum or topic
- Setting group and section restrictions for a discussion forum or topic

HIDING A DISCUSSION FORUM OR TOPIC

Hidden topics do not display on the Discussions List page, except to students with permission to see hidden forums and topics or to manage discussions. By hiding topics, you can control which topics students can access at different times throughout the course. For example, you can create weekly discussion topics for students to reflect on the material covered in each week of the course and make each topic available for one week only.

You can specify start and end dates for when a forum or topic is visible so you can set up visibility ahead of time to match your course’s calendar.

Tip: Instead of scheduling a topic to disappear as soon as you want the discussion to end, consider locking the topic at that point and keeping it visible for another few days. This allows students to review the discussion after it closes so that they don’t miss the last posts added.

1. On the Discussions List page, click Edit from the drop-down menu of the forum or topic you want to hide. You can also set visibility options when creating a new forum or topic.
2. In the Availability section of the Properties tab, select the options you want:
   - To hide the forum or topic immediately, select Hide this forum or Hide this topic. The forum or topic remains hidden until you select Forum is always visible or Topic is always visible again.
   - To hide the forum or topic until a certain date or after a certain date, select Forum is visible for a specific date range or Topic is visible for a specific date range, then select Has Start Date or Has End Date to specify the dates.
3. Click Save or Save and Close.
LOCKING A DISCUSSION FORUM OR TOPIC

Locking a topic prevents students from creating new posts or modifying existing posts, essentially making the conversation “read only”. Students can still view the forum or topic. Locking a topic is an effective way of closing a conversation while allowing students to refer back to posts.

You can specify start and end dates for when a forum or topic unlocks so you can set things up ahead of time to match your course’s calendar.

Tip: Consider locking a topic to end a conversation, then using a pinned summary post inside the topic. This way when students access the topic, your summary appears at the top.

1. On the Discussions List page, click Edit from the drop-down menu of the forum or topic you want to hide. You can also set visibility options when creating a new forum or topic.
2. In the Locking Options section of the Properties tab, select the options you want:
   o To lock the forum or topic immediately, select Lock forum or Lock topic. The forum or topic remains locked until you select Unlock forum or Unlock topic again.
   o To open the forum or topic within a date range, select Unlock forum for a specific date range or Unlock topic for a specific date range, then select Has Start Date or Has End Date to specify the dates.
3. Click Save or Save and Close.

SETTING RELEASE CONDITIONS FOR A DISCUSSION FORUM OR TOPIC

Release conditions enable you to specify requirements that students must satisfy before they can access a discussion forum or topic.

For example, you can require that students view a content topic or submit an assignment to a dropbox folder before accessing a discussion topic. Or, you might create a forum or topic for specific groups.
Add release conditions to a forum or topic

1. On the Discussions List page, click Edit from the drop-down menu of the forum or topic you want to create release conditions for. You can also set release conditions when creating a new forum or topic.
2. In the Release Conditions section of the Restrictions tab, do one of the following:
   o If you have already created a release condition elsewhere and want to attach it to this forum or topic, click Attach Existing. Select the conditions you want to add, then click Attach. For example, release conditions include completing a dropbox submission, scoring a specified grade in a particular quiz, completing a survey, or being enrolled in a particular section.
   o If you want to add a new release condition that does not already exist, click Create and Attach. Enter the details for the new release condition, then click Create.
3. Choose whether All of the following conditions or Any of the following conditions must be met in order for students to access the forum or topic in the drop-down list above the listed conditions.
4. Click Save.

Remove release conditions from a forum or topic

1. On the Discussions List page, click Edit from the drop-down menu of the forum or topic you want to remove release conditions from.
2. In the Release Conditions section of the Restrictions tab, do one of the following:
   o Click the Remove icon beside each condition you want to remove.
   o To remove all conditions, click Remove All Conditions.
3. Click Save.
SETTING GROUP AND SECTION RESTRICTIONS FOR A FORUM OR TOPIC

You can restrict a forum or topic so that it is only accessible to members of a specific group or section. This enables you to:

- Create discussion areas where members of a group or section can collaborate on assignments or discuss course material in small teams.
- Create separate forums or topics for each group or section in a course offering.

Note: You must create groups or sections before you can set group or section restrictions.

Restrict a single forum or topic

1. Do one of the following:
   - On the Discussions List page, click Edit from the drop-down menu of the forum or topic you want to hide. You can also set visibility options when creating a new forum or topic.
   - If you are creating a new forum or topic, you can create group and section restrictions after clicking Save.
2. In the Group and Sections Restrictions area of the Restrictions tab, select the Restrict this forum to the following groups and sections or Restrict this topic to the following groups and sections check box.
3. Click Add Groups and Sections.
4. In the Add Groups and Sections window, select a Group or Section Category from the drop-down list.
5. Click Add.
6. Click Save.

To remove a group or section’s access, click the Remove icon beside the group or section, then click Save.

To open the forum or topic to everyone again, clear the Restrict this forum to the following groups and sections check box or Restrict this topic to the following groups and sections check box, then click Save.

Restrict multiple forums or topic simultaneously

1. On the Discussions List page, click Restrictions from the tool navigation.
2. Select a Group or Section Category from the drop-down list.
3. Select the Forum containing the topics you want to restrict or select All Forums from the drop-down list.
4. To restrict a forum or topic to specific groups or sections, select the check box in the Restricted column, then select the groups or sections you want to have access to the forum or topic.
5. Click Save.

To open a forum or topic to everyone, clear the check box in the Restricted column and click Save.
Automatically create restricted discussion topics for groups or sections

You can automatically create a discussion topic for each group in a selected category. Topics get their names from the group categories and groups they associate with.

1. On the Discussions List page, click Restrictions from the tool navigation.
2. Click the Automatically create restricted topics link.
3. Select a Group or Section Category from the drop-down list.
4. Select where to create the topics from the Forum drop-down list. If you want to create a new forum for the restricted topics, click New Forum.
5. Click Create.
TOPIC ASSESSMENT

You can evaluate students’ individual posts and have D2L automatically calculate a topic score for each student, or you can assign a topic score directly to each student. If you choose to assess individual posts, you can specify how you want the system to calculate each student’s overall topic score in the Posts section of the Assessment tab when you edit a topic.

CALCULATION METHODS

There are five possible calculation methods that you can select when configuring a topic for assessment.

- **Average post score**: This calculation method averages all of the post scores included per student.
- **Maximum post score**: This calculation method identifies the highest score of all the post scores included per student.
- **Minimum post score**: This calculation method identifies the lowest score of all the post scores included per student.
- **Mode post score - Highest on multiple**: This calculation method looks at the frequency of scores on posts, then selects the highest occurrence of a score per student. Once it picks the frequency, the system looks to see if multiple scores occur at that frequency. If not, it assigns that score to the student. If there are multiple scores with the same frequency, it will choose the highest of those scores. For example, if a score of 7 occurs 2 times, a score of 8 occurs 3 times, and a score of 9 occurs 3 times, the system will choose the frequency 3 and the score of 9.
- **Mode post score - Lowest on multiple**: This calculation method looks at the frequency of scores on posts, then selects the highest occurrence of a score per student. Once it picks the frequency, the system looks to see if multiple scores occur at that frequency. If not, it assigns that score to the student. If there are multiple scores with the same frequency, it will choose the lowest of those scores. For example, if a score of 7 occurs 2 times, a score of 8 occurs 3 times, and a score of 9 occurs 3 times, the system will choose the frequency 3 and the score of 8.

CONFIGURING A TOPIC FOR ASSESSMENT

1. On the Discussions List page, click Edit Topic from the drop-down menu of the topic you want to configure.
2. Click the Assessment tab.
3. If you want to link a topic score to a grade item, select your Grade Item from the drop-down list, or click New Grade Item to create a grade item for the topic in a pop-up window.
4. Specify the number you want to Score Out Of. This is the scale, ranging from zero to the number you enter, that students are evaluated on. For example, if you enter 15, students are assessed on a scale from zero to fifteen.
5. Click Add Rubric to associate the topic with a rubric.
Note: A Rubrics section displays in the collapsible Description area of the topic, containing links to any rubrics you associate with the topic. Clicking on a rubric link will open the rubric in a pop-up window, allowing students to preview the expectations for the topic.

6. If you want to assess individual posts (rather than assigning an overall topic score directly for each student):

   ![Image of assessment options](image)

   a. Select the **Allow assessment of individual posts** check box.
   b. Select the **Calculation method** you want to use to determine students’ overall topic scores based on post scores.
   c. By default, the system ignores unassessed posts when calculating the topic score. However, if you want the calculation to treat unassessed posts as if those posts receive a score of zero, select the **Include unassessed posts in the calculated topic score as zero** check box.

7. Click **Save and Close**.
**ASSESSING STUDENTS**

You can assess students from inside the topic while reading posts or from the Assess Topic page. Assessing students from within the topic lets you read students’ posts in context and evaluate them as you perform other reading-related tasks (approving posts, marking posts as read, replying, etc.). When assessing students from the Assess Topic page, you can see topic scores for all students and view all of a student’s posts together on one screen. Assessable topics display a Can be assessed icon beside the topic name in the Discussions List.

Note: If a topic uses post approval, you must approve a post before you can assess it.

**Assess students from with a topic**

1. On the Discussions List page, click on the topic you want to assess.
2. Do one of the following:
   a. Individual posts – *Note: You must select the Allow Assessment of Individual Posts checkbox in the Assessment tab of the Edit Topic page to assess individual posts.*
      i. Click Assess Topic from the drop-down menu of the topic.
      
      ![Assess Topic Menu](image)

      ii. Click the Topic Score link beneath the name of the student you want to assess. This will bring up all of their posts for the topic, which you can then assign individual scores.

   b. The topic as a whole – *Note: You must clear the Allow Assessment of Individual Posts checkbox in the Assessment tab of the Edit Topic page to assess the topic as a whole.*
      i. Click Assess Topic from the drop-down menu of the topic.
      ii. Click the Topic Score link beneath the name of the student you want to assess. This will bring up all of their posts for the topic, which you can then assign an overall Topic Score for.
3. Click Save, then click Close.
Assess students from the Assess Topic page

1. On the Discussions List page, click Assess Topic from the drop-down menu of the topic you want to assess.

![Assess Topic dropdown menu](image)

*Tip: If the Score column is empty on the Assess Topic page, click the Manage Columns button, select the Score Value and Percentage check boxes, and click Save.*

2. Do one of the following:

   - On the Users tab, click Topic Score beneath the name of the student you want to assess.
   - In the Assessments tab, click the name of the student you want to assess.

*Tip: In either tab, you can search for specific students by typing all or part of a student’s name or student ID in the Search For field and clicking Search. You can also filter the view to display members of a specific group or section by selecting from the View By drop-down list and clicking Apply.*

![Search and Filter options](image)

3. In the Topic Score Details window, enter a score in the Score column beside each post you want to assess.

*Important Note: If a student’s posts display across multiple pages, be sure to save each page before navigating to another page of posts. Any new post scores entered are lost if you change pages without saving.*

You can also enter comments in the Feedback field.

4. Click Save and Close.
Linking an assessment to a grade item

When you link a topic’s score to a grade item in your grade book, your students’ scores automatically transfer to the grade book. This enables you to factor the topic score into students’ final grades for the course. It also enables you to display the result to students since students cannot view their topic score directly through the Discussions tool, but can view their grades in the grade book.

*Note:* You can only link numeric grade items to discussion topics.

Publishing topic scores to the grade book

You assess topics linked to grade items in the same way you assess stand-alone topics, by assigning a score to each post or to each student for the topic overall. However, you must publish the score to the grade book in order for D2L to update the grade item.

When you publish the topic score, D2L updates the grade item in the grade book. Any additional changes you make to a student’s score automatically release to the grade book. Students can only view Published scores.

1. On the Discussions List page, click Assess Topic from the drop-down menu of the topic you want to assess.
2. On the Assess Topic page, do one of the following:
   - To publish scores for specific students, select the check box in the Publish to Grades column beside each student whose score you want to release, then click Save and Close.
   - To publish scores for all students, click Publish All Scores to Grades near the top of the page.
EDITING A DISCUSSION FORUM OR TOPIC

Editing a discussion forum gives you the ability to change the forum name, availability and locking options, release conditions, and group and section restrictions. Editing a discussion topic gives you the ability to reassign the topic to a different forum, rename the topic, and change the availability and locking options, restrictions, assessment options, and associated learning objectives.

1. On the Discussions List page, click Edit from the drop-down menu of the forum or topic you want to edit.
2. Make your changes.
3. Click Save and Close.

COPYING A DISCUSSION FORUM

Copying a forum creates a new forum with the same properties as the original. You can copy the forum’s topics and any pinned threads within those topics. Copying a forum does not copy any normal, unpinned threads inside the forum’s topics; however you can copy or move individual threads from existing topics once you create the new topics.

1. On the Discussions List page, click Copy from the More Actions button.
2. Click Copy a Forum.
3. Select the forum you want to copy from the Forum to Copy drop-down list.
4. In the New Forum Title field, enter a name for the copied forum.
5. Select your **Copy Options**:
   - **Copy topics**: Select this option to copy all of the topics inside the forum; this creates new topics with the same titles and properties as the existing ones.
   - **Copy pinned threads**: If you choose to copy topics, select this option to copy any pinned threads within those topics. If you use pinned threads to post information about a topic (rules, evaluation criteria, etc.), you should copy these threads along with the topics.

6. Click **Copy**.

**COPYING A DISCUSSION TOPIC**

Copying a topic creates a new topic with the same properties as the original. Links to grade items or competency activities are not copied. You can choose to copy pinned threads along with the topic. Copying a topic does not copy any normal, unpinned threads inside the topic; however you can copy or move individual threads from inside the existing topic after you create the new topic.

If you want **to move a topic from one forum to another**, click ✎ **Edit Topic** from the drop-down menu of the topic you want to move, then select the desired forum from the Forum drop-down list in the Properties tab.

1. On the **Discussions List page**, click ⚒ **Copy** from the **More Actions button**.

2. Click 📄 **Copy a Topic**.

3. Select the forum that contains the topic you want to copy from the Forum to Copy drop-down list.
4. Select the **Topic to Copy** from the drop-down list.
5. In the **New Topic Title field**, enter a name for the copied topic.
6. In the Copy Destination list, select the forum you want to copy the topic to. If you select multiple forums, each forum creates a copy of the topic.

7. Select the Copy pinned threads check box if you want to copy pinned threads into the new topic. Select this if you use pinned threads to provide information and instructions about the topic.

8. Click Copy.

COPYING OR MOVING A DISCUSSION THREAD OR POST

Discussion threads and posts can be moved to topics other than the original topic they are posted to. If you think a thread or post belongs in a different topic, you can move it by copying it and choosing the option to delete the original thread or post. If a thread or post is applicable to more than one topic, you can copy it into as many other topics as you want.

Copy or move a discussion thread

1. Click Copy Thread from the thread's drop-down menu.
2. Select where you want to copy the thread to in the Destination Forum and Destination Topic drop-down lists.
3. Select the Delete original post after copy completes check box to delete the original post in the thread after the copy completes.

   *Important:* If you choose to delete the original thread post, it will still be visible in the original topic to students with the appropriate permissions.

4. Click Copy.

Copy or move a discussion post

1. Click Copy Post from the post's drop-down menu.
2. Select where you want to copy the post to in the Destination Forum and Destination Topic drop-down lists.
3. Select the Delete original post after copy completes check box to delete the original post after the copy completes.

   *Important:* If you choose to delete the original post, it will still be visible in the original topic to students with the appropriate permissions.

4. Click Copy.
DELETE DISCUSSION FORUMS OR TOPICS

1. On the Discussions List page, click Delete from the drop-down menu of the forum or topic you want to delete.
2. Click Yes.

DELETE A DISCUSSION THREAD FROM A TOPIC

Click Delete Thread from the drop-down menu of the thread you want to delete.

DELETE A DISCUSSION POST FROM A THREAD

Important: When you delete a post, the system also deletes any replies to that post.

Click Delete Post from the drop-down menu of the post you want to delete.

REORDERING DISCUSSION FORUMS AND TOPIC

Reorder forums and topics when you want to change the order in which they appear to students, based on your course and teaching preferences.

1. On the Discussions List page, click Reorder from the More Actions button.
2. Select the position in the list where you want each forum or topic to appear using the Sort Order drop-down list.
3. If the topics in a forum are not visible, click the Expand icon beside the forum or click Expand All at the top of the list.
4. Click Save.

RESTORING A DELETED FORUM OR TOPIC

You must have the Delete and Restore Forums and Topics permission enabled to restore deleted topics and forums.

1. On the Discussions List page, click Restore from the More Actions button.
2. Click Restore beside the forum or topic you want to restore.
3. Click Yes.

Note: If the forum you restore contains one or more topics, you will be given the option to also restore the forum's associated topics.
RESTORING A DELETED DISCUSSION THREAD OR POST

To restore a deleted post, you must have permission enabled and you must have the Display deleted posts option enabled on the Settings page.

Restore a deleted discussion thread

Click the Restore Thread link in the thread you want to restore.

Restore a deleted discussion post

Click the Restore Post link in the post you want to restore.

Note: If the post you restore is a reply to another post, and the other post was also deleted, both posts restore.

ADDING POST APPROVAL TO A DISCUSSION FORUM OR TOPIC

Click Edit from the drop-down menu of the forum or topic you want to add post approval to and select A moderator must approve individual posts before they display in the forum in the Properties tab to ensure that you have the ability to approve posts activated.

APPROVING AND UNAPPROVING DISCUSSION THREADS AND POSTS

If a topic requires post approval, posts only appear to students with permission to approve them. You must manually approve these posts to make them visible to all students. Students with permission to approve posts in a topic can create posts automatically without requiring their approval.

You can enable and disable post approval from the Properties tab when creating or editing a forum or topic. Once you enable post approval, Moderated appears beside the forum or topic name.

If a post is not appropriate for the topic and you do not want to approve it, you can do any of the following:

• Leave the post unapproved.
• Edit the post before approving it.
• Delete the post.
Approve a discussion thread

Click Approve Thread from the drop-down menu of the thread to approve all posts in the thread.

Approve a discussion post

Click the Approve Post link inside the post you want to approve, or click Approve Post from the drop-down menu of the post.

Unapprove a previously approved discussion thread

Click Unapprove Thread from the drop-down menu of the thread you want to unapprove.

Unapprove a previously approved discussion post

Click Unapprove Post from the drop-down menu of the post you want to unapprove.

Finding discussion posts that require approval

You can find unapproved posts in the following ways:

- On the Discussions List page, the number of unapproved posts displays beneath each topic that requires post approval. To see only topics that contain unapproved posts, select Unapproved from the Filter by tool navigation area.
- Inside a thread, unapproved posts display an Approve Post link at the top of the post.
VIEWING DISCUSSION STATISTICS

Statistics give you an overview of student activity in your discussion topics and forums. You can use this information to determine which topics stimulate conversation and which do not, or which students post frequently and which hang back. As the semester unfolds, you can use statistics to pinpoint topics in need of conversation-starters and to follow the participation levels of different students. You can send email reminders to students who have not been participating or ask overly vocal students to slow down and give others a chance to contribute. When the semester ends, statistics help you identify the topics that were most effective and the ones you might want to omit or modify for the next course.

Notes

- *Post counts do not include unapproved and deleted posts.*
- *Only students who appear in the roster appear when viewing statistics by student; however, totals include posts by all students, including instructors.*
- *You can sort statistics by clicking on any column heading.*

View statistics for a specific discussion form or topic

Click [View Topic Statistics](#) or [View Forum Statistics](#) from the drop-down menu of the forum or topic you want to view.

View statistics for the entire course

On the [Discussions List page](#), click [Statistics](#) from the tool navigation.

Exporting discussion statistics

You can export statistics to a CSV file and then import the data into a spreadsheet application to perform further analysis.

1. On the [Discussions List page](#), click [Statistics](#) from the tool navigation.
2. Click [Export to CSV File](#).
3. Once the file has finished processing, click the file name to download the file.
VIEWING A DISCUSSION POST’S HISTORY

When a post is edited, the post history log records all previous versions of the post, its editors, and when it was approved or unapproved.

Click View Post History from the drop-down menu of the post.