A Reference guide to Using Discussion Board for Your Subjects

The discussion board tool in your LMS enables you to share your thoughts, opinions, and understanding of a topic with your subject members. A group discussion board is also available to you if your tutor creates learning groups for your subject. You can access your group discussion board from the My Groups panel on your subject’s left menu.

You can refer to this guide for instructions on how to use the discussion board tool in your LMS. Alternatively, click a link below to view instructions for that function within the tool.

- Access your subject’s discussion board
- Use options on the forum page
- Create a thread
- Read discussion posts
- Reply to posts
- Save your post as draft to submit it later
- Edit or delete discussion posts
- Rate discussion posts
- Mark threads or posts as read or unread
- Flag threads or posts for later attention
- Collect discussion posts
- Sort and order collected posts
- Filter discussion posts after collecting
- Search content on discussion board

Access your subject’s discussion board

Depending on how your subject is structured and designed, you can access your subject's discussion board from the left menu or the weekly content.

A discussion board includes discussion forums and threads. You can consider a discussion board as a book that includes forums similar to chapters. The forums include threads similar to topics, and the threads include your posts similar to pages within a topic.

When you access your discussion board, the Discussion Board page is displayed. This page lists all the discussion forums for your subject and includes forum information such as number of participants, total posts and unread posts for each forum. You will notice that forums containing unread posts appear in bold.

Let us now look at how you can access your subject’s discussion board:
1. To access the discussion board, on your subject's left menu, click **Discussion Board**.
2. To view all communications within a forum, on the **Discussion Board** page, under **Forum**, click the forum title.

![Image of discussion board interface](image)

3. To read the unread posts within a forum, in the **Unread Posts** column, click the blue-circled value corresponding to that forum. For example, to read the unread posts within the forum **Share useful resources**, in the Unread Posts column, click **1** as shown below:

![Image of unread posts](image)

It is recommended that you use the breadcrumbs to navigate within discussion boards. Using your browser's back button may lead to page load errors. Breadcrumbs are located to the right of the Home icon above the left menu and content area.

![Image of breadcrumbs](image)

**Work with discussion forums**

When you click a forum title on the **Discussion Board** page, the corresponding Forum page is displayed. On this page, you can view a list of threads within that forum and thread details such as the date of creation, title, author, status (published, locked, hidden, or draft), number of unread posts, and total posts within a thread.
Use the options on the forum page

The forum page includes features that help you reorder the list of threads according to their date, title, author, or number of posts. In addition, you can use the options on this page to subscribe to notifications, search a specific text or content, view threads with a specific status, define the number of threads that you want to view on a page, and create threads.

Let us now look at how you can use these features and options on the forum page:

1. To access a forum, on the Discussion board page, under Forum, click the forum title.
2. To receive notifications on new posts within the forum, on the action bar of the Forum page, click the Subscribe button. The action bar is the dark blue bar across the top of the page and includes the Create Thread, Subscribe, Search, and the Display buttons.
3. To discontinue receiving notifications for posts in the forum, on the action bar, click the Unsubscribe button.
4. To view threads with a specific status (published, hidden or draft), on the action bar, point to Display, and then on the drop-down menu, select a status. For example, to view all threads that are saved as drafts, on the action bar, point to Display, and then on the drop-down menu, click Drafts Only.
5. To reorder the list of threads according to (date, thread title, author or number of posts), on the row header of the thread list view, click the column title. For example, to reorder the list of threads according to their title, on the row header, click Thread. You will notice an arrow to the right of the column title that indicates if threads are displayed in the ascending or descending order.
6. To select a thread in a forum, in the row for that thread, click the check box to the left of date.
7. To select all the threads in a forum, on the row header, click the checkbox to the left of the column title Date.
8. To edit the number of threads you can view on a page, in the bottom-left corner of the Forum page, click Edit Paging, in the Items per page box, type the required number, and then click Go. Click the Close button to exit the Edit Paging dialog box without editing.
9. To navigate to the next, previous, or last page in a forum, use the right and left arrows in the upper-right corner above the row header.
Create a discussion thread

You can create one or more discussion threads in a forum provided your tutor enabled this option for you. A thread includes an initial post mostly created by your tutor and all replies to that post.

At times, your tutor may create a moderated or graded forum that will not allow you to create threads. For example, your tutor may create a forum as an alternative to group assignment and include grades for your participation. In forums of this type, you cannot create threads. You can only reply to the initial post created by your tutor.

Let us now look at how you can create a thread within a forum:

1. To add a new thread to a forum, on the action bar of the Forum page, click Create Thread.
2. To specify a title for the thread, in the **Subject** box, type the thread title.
3. To add an initial post that other subject members can reply to, in the **Message** box, type the content for your post. You can use the content editor tools to format your text, add images, share or embed videos and more. Click the down arrows in the top-right corner of the Message box to expand and view all the available content editor tools.
4. You can also attach a file to your post. Under **Attachments**, click **Browse My Computer**, navigate to the location of the file on your computer, select the file, and then click **Open**.
5. To create the thread, click **Submit**. The thread title for your thread appears on the Forum page.

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**Read discussion posts**

A thread includes an initial post from your tutor and the subsequent replies to it from your subject members. Within a thread, you can reply to a post, modify, or remove your post depending on the permissions defined by your tutor. Additionally, you can mark a post as read or unread, flag a post for later attention, or collect posts into a printable format.
Let us now look at how you can read discussion posts within a thread:

1. To open a thread and read its posts, on the Forum page, in the Thread column, click the thread title.

   By default, the initial post and the reply to it are expanded.

2. To collapse all posts, open and read them one by one, at the top of the initial post, click the Collapse All button.

3. To update and view the most recent posts from your subject members, in the top-right corner of the page, click the Refresh option.

4. To read individual posts, click each post and expand it. To collapse a post after you read it, point to the post title, and then click Collapse.

5. To view all unread posts within a thread, click the number to the left of the Unread option as shown in the image below.
Reply to discussion posts

You can actively participate in discussions within your subject by responding to posts from your tutor and peers, commenting on posts, and rating posts from your peers.

Let us now look at how you can reply to discussion posts:

1. To access the discussion thread that you want to contribute to, on the Discussion Board page, under Forum, click the forum title. On the Forum page, in the Thread column, click the thread title.
2. To respond to the initial post from your tutor, at the bottom of the post, click Reply. To include the original text from your tutor’s post in your reply, use the Quote option.

To comment/respond to a subsequent post from a subject member, click the post to expand it, and then at the bottom of the post, click Reply.
3. In the **Message** box, type your response. You can use the content editor tools to format your text, add images, share or embed videos and more. Click the down arrows in the top-right corner of the **Message** box to expand and view all the available content editor tools.

4. You can attach a file to your reply if desired. To upload a file from your computer, click **Browse My Computer**, navigate to the location of the file on your computer, select the file, and then click **Open**.

5. To post your reply, click **Submit**.  
   **Note:** If you reply to the initial post from your tutor, your post appears at the bottom of all posts in the thread. If you reply to a subsequent post from a subject member, your post appears indented below the post you replied to.

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**Save your post as a draft to submit it later**

You can save your discussion post as a draft and return to it at a later time to submit it.

Let us look at how you can save your post as a draft, return to the draft post and submit it:

1. To read a post within a thread, navigate to the post, click and expand it.
2. To reply to the post, at the bottom of the post, click **Reply**, and then in the **Message** box, type your reply.
3. To save a draft of your reply, click **Save Draft**. Your draft post now appears indented below the post you replied to. A green **Draft** label is displayed to the right of the subject line.
4. To return to your draft post, navigate to the post using the relevant forum and thread titles, expand the post, and then at the bottom of the post, click **Edit**.
5. Make the required changes to your post. Attach files to your post if desired.
6. To confirm the changes and submit your reply, click **Submit**.
7. You can also choose to remove a draft post. To do so, navigate to your draft post, expand it, and then at the bottom of the post, click **Delete**.

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**Edit or delete discussion posts**

You can edit your post or remove your own post if the student permission settings allow you to do so. If your tutor enabled the **Edit** and **Delete** options for you in the forum settings, then you can view these options next to the **Reply** option at the bottom of your post.

Let us now look at how you can edit or delete your post:

1. To navigate to the forum containing your post, on your subject’s left menu, click **Discussion Board**, and then on the **Discussion Board** page, under **Forum**, click the forum title.
2. To access the thread that includes the post you want to edit, on the **Forum** page, in the **Thread** column, click the thread title.
3. To edit the post that you submitted, scroll down to your post and expand it, and then at the bottom of the post, click **Edit**. Make the required changes to your post. Attach files if desired.
4. To confirm the changes and re-submit your post, click **Submit**.
5. To remove one of your own posts in a thread, navigate to the required post, expand it, and then at the bottom of the post, click **Delete**. You can only delete your own posts. You are not allowed to delete posts from other members.
6. To confirm the removal of a post, in the pop-up box, click **OK**.
Rate discussion posts
You can assign ratings to posts and indicate them as informative or useful if your tutor set this option for you within the forum settings. In addition, you can use this feature for peer review. For example, you could review your peers’ posts, rate them and post your comments as replies to their posts.

Let us now look at how you can rate your peers’ posts:

1. To navigate to the forum containing the post, on your subject's left menu, click Discussion Board, and then on the Discussion Board page, under Forum, click the forum title.
2. To access the thread that includes the post you want to rate, on the Forum page, in the Thread column, click the thread title.
3. To rate the post, scroll down to the post, expand it, and then in the right corner below the post title, select one to five stars for your rating. You will notice that, when you point to the stars, the option changes to show your rating. The overall rating displays the average rating from all subject members who rated the post.
Mark threads or posts as read or unread

Posts in a thread are automatically marked as read when you expand them. You can also manually mark a post or all posts in a thread as read or unread. The **Thread Actions** drop-down menu on the forum page and the **Message Actions** drop-down menu on the thread page include options that allow you to mark posts as read or unread, flag a post or clear the flag, and collect posts for easy reading. You will notice that both these menus are available at the top and bottom of the forum and thread pages for ease of use.

Let us now look at how you can mark a thread or post as read or unread:

1. To navigate to a forum, on your subject’s left menu, click **Discussion Board**, and then on the **Discussion Board** page, under **Forum**, click the forum title.
2. To mark a thread as read, on the **Forum** page, select the thread, point to **Thread Actions**, and then on the drop-down menu, select **Mark as Read**. You will notice that all posts including the unread posts within the thread are now marked as read. As a result, the Unread Posts value for the thread now displays as 0.
3. To mark a thread as unread, select the thread, point to **Thread Actions**, and then on the drop-down menu, select **Mark as Unread**. After you do so, all posts within the thread are marked as unread and therefore, the Unread Posts value and Total Posts value for the thread are the same.

4. To mark an individual post within a thread as unread, on the **Forum** page, click the thread title, find the post, expand it, and then click the circular indicator to the left of the title.

5. Alternatively, select the check box for the post, point to **Message Actions**, and then on the menu, select **Unread**. You will notice that all unread posts have a green circular indicator to the left of their title.

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Flag threads or posts for later attention

In the discussion boards within your LMS, you can flag a thread or posts in the thread for later attention.

Let us now look at how you can flag a thread or post:

1. To navigate to a forum, on your subject’s left menu, click **Discussion Board**, and then on the **Discussion Board** page, under **Forum**, click the forum title.
2. To flag a thread, on the **Forum** page, select the thread, point to **Thread Actions**, and then on the drop-down menu, click **Set Flag**. You will notice that a red flag appears to the right of the check box for that thread.
3. To clear the flag for a thread, select the thread, point to **Thread Actions**, and then on the menu, click **Clear Flag**.
4. To flag a post within a thread, on the **Forum** page, in the **Thread** column, click the thread title. Next, scroll down to the post you want to flag, expand the post and then click the flag icon to the left of its title. The flag icon now appears green.

5. Alternatively, select the check box for the post, point to **Message Actions**, and then on the menu, select **Set Flag**.

6. To clear the flag for a post, click the green flag icon to the left of its title. Alternatively, select the post, point to **Message Actions**, and then on the menu, select **Clear Flag**.

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**Collect discussion posts**

The Collect option within discussion boards allows you to collect individual posts or all posts from a thread and organize these posts for easy reading. When you collect posts, they are displayed on a new page called **Collection**. On this page, you can sort or filter posts and print them if desired.

Let us now look at how you can collect individual posts or threads, or all threads in a forum:
1. To navigate to a forum, on your subject’s left menu, click **Discussion Board**, and then on the **Discussion Board** page, under **Forum**, click the forum title.

2. To collect all the posts in a thread, on the **Forum** page, select the thread, and then above the row header, click **Collect**.

3. Alternatively, on the **Forum** page, click the thread title. Next at the top of the page, click **Select All**, point to **Message Actions**, and then on the drop-down menu, click **Collect**.

4. To collect all threads within a forum, on the **Forum** page, in the thread list view, select the check box to the left of **Date**, and then click **Collect**. Note that, when you collect all threads, all posts within the discussion forum is displayed on the Collection page.

5. To collect individual posts within a thread, on the **Forum** page, click the thread title. Next, select the posts you want to collect, point to **Message Actions**, and then on the menu, click **Collect**.

**Sort discussion posts**

In your LMS, you can collect posts from different threads within a discussion forum. Now, you may want to sort these posts for the ease of reading and use. The Sort option on the Collections page lets you sort your posts based on criteria such as author’s last and first names, subject, date of last post in a thread, thread order, or the overall rating for posts.

Let us now look at how you can sort discussion posts after collecting them:

1. To navigate to a forum, on your subject’s left menu, click **Discussion Board**, and then on the **Discussion Board** page, under **Forum**, click the forum title.

2. To collect threads, on the **Forum** page, in the thread list view, select the required threads, and then above the row header, click **Collect**.

3. To sort your post, on the **Collection** page, in the top-left corner, point to **Sort by**, and then on the drop-down menu, select the criteria you want to sort by. For example, to sort the collected posts by their author’s first name, point to **Sort by**, and then on the menu, select **Author’s First Name**.
4. To order your collected posts by the ascending and descending order of your sorting criteria, point to **Order**, and then on the menu, click **Ascending or Descending**. To understand this better, in our last example we used the author’s first name to sort the collected posts. Now, if you order it by the descending order, you will notice that posts are sorted by the first name of authors in the order Z-A.

**Filter discussion posts**

You can use the Filter option on the action bar of the Collection page to view posts from selected authors, posts with a specific status, read or unread posts, or tags for posts. This helps you narrow down your search result and view only posts that are of interest to you, particularly if you want to print them. For example, if you want to view unread posts from two specific threads in a forum, you can simply collect the required threads, and then filter them by their read status.

Let us now look at how you can filter the collected discussion posts:

1. To navigate to a forum, on your subject’s left menu, click **Discussion Board**, and then on the **Discussion Board** page, under **Forum**, click the forum title.
2. To collect threads, on the **Forum** page, in the thread list view, select the required threads, and then above the row header, click **Collect**.
3. To expand the filter field and view the filter options, on the **Collection** page, in the right corner of the action bar, click **Filter**. The action bar is the dark blue bar across the top of the Collection page.
4. To filter and view only unread posts from your collection, in the filter field, click the down arrow for **Read Status**, in the drop-down list, click **Unread**, and then click **Go**.
5. To filter and view posts from a specific author, on the action bar, click **Filter**, in the filter field, click the down arrow for **Author**, in the drop-down list, select the name of the author, and then click **Go**.
6. To filter and views posts by their status such as published or locked, on the action bar, click **Filter**, in the filter field, click the down arrow for **Status**, in the drop-down list, select the status, and then click **Go**.

**Search content on discussion board**

You will notice that the Search option is available at all levels of the discussion board. The Search option enables you to look for specific content in the current thread, current forum, current discussion board, or across all forums in your subject.

Let us now look at how you can search for specific text within your discussion board:

1. To access the discussion board for your subject, on the left menu, click **Discussion Board**.
2. To expand and view the search field, on the **Discussion Board** page, in the right corner of the action bar, click **Search**. The action bar is the dark blue bar across the top of the Discussion Board page.
3. To look up a specific content or text, in the **Search** box, type a keyword for the content you want to search.
4. To specify an area for search, in the search field, click the down arrow next to **in**, and then on the drop-down menu, select if you want to look in the **Current Discussion Board**, or **All Forums in Subject**. Note: if you use the Search option within a thread or a Forum page, additional search area such as Current Thread and Current Forum are available on the drop-down menu.
5. To further refine your search results, click the **After** and **Before** check boxes and specify a date and time between which the required content or text was posted. You can type the date and time in the respective boxes or use the pop-up Date Selection Calendar and Time Selection Menu to select the date and time.
6. To display the search results, click **Go**.