

## Adding a Forum Activity

Course participants can have asynchronous discussions, i.e. discussions that take place over an extended period of time, using the *Forum* activity module. Teachers using the courseware can add new *Forum* activities or they can deploy the pre-existing ones.

Forums are one of the most widely-used tools for collaboration in online education and training. Moodle offers teachers a variety of forum types such as a standard forum where anyone can start a new discussion at any time, a forum where each student can post exactly one discussion, or a question and answer (Q and A) forum where students must first post before being able to view other students' posts. Teachers can allow files to be attached to forum posts and image attachments are displayed in the posting.

Participants can subscribe to a forum to receive notifications of new forum posts. A teacher can set the subscription mode to optional, forced or auto, or prevent subscription completely. If required, students can be blocked from posting more than a given number of posts in a given time period; this can prevent individuals from dominating discussions.

Forum posts can be rated by teachers or students (peer evaluation), and the ratings can be aggregated to form a final grade in the grade book.

## Using Forum Activity to Enhance Blended Learning

Forums have many uses in linking the online learning environment to the face-to-face classroom. In addition to enabling students to communicate with each other socially or about learning tasks outside of the classroom, forums can be used to:

- make course announcements (using a news forum with forced subscription)
- discuss course content or reading materials
- continue discussing an issue raised in a face-to-face class
- privately support students one-on-one (using a forum with separate groups and with one student per group)

## Step-by-Step Instructions for Adding a Forum Activity

**Important note:** Since our upgrade to Moodle 3.1, some of the following screenshots may appear slightly different in your course, but the principles remain the same.

1. Click the *Turn editing on* button on your course home page.
2. Click the Add an activity or resource link in the topic where you want to add this activity. The Add an activity or resource window appears.
3. Select Forum in the left panel under RESOURCES.
4. Click the *Add* button.

The *Adding a new Forum* page appears.

Settings in the **General** section are used to set the general information about the activity.

## ▼ General

**Forum name\***

**Description**



**Display description on course page**

**Forum type** 

5. Type a descriptive name in the Forum text box.
6. Click the Show editing tools tab in the Description text box to display the Text editor toolbar if needed.
7. If students are supposed to perform a specific task, type the task instructions in the Description text box. (Otherwise, enter a general description of the purpose of this forum.)
8. To display the instructions on the course home page, select Display description on course page. (To keep the page less cluttered this is not recommended.)
9. Select the appropriate type of forum in the *Forum type* option.
  - *Single simple discussion*: This does not allow students to add a new topic. All postings are under one topic, in one thread. Many teachers like this because it helps keep the forum very focused.
  - *Each person posts one discussion*: Participants can start only one new topic, but they can reply to other topics.
  - *Q and A forum*: Participants cannot see other participants' postings until they have posted something themselves.
  - *Standard forum displayed in blog-like format*: This is an open type of forum for participants to start new topics. It is displayed on one page and users click a *Discuss this topic* link to reply to a posting.
  - *Standard forum for general use*: This is the standard forum throughout the courseware that allows any participant to start a new discussion topic.

Settings in the **Attachment and word count** section are used to set the parameters for students using the forum.

## ▼ Attachments and word count

**Maximum attachment size** 

**Maximum number of attachments**



**Display word count** 

10. The *Maximum attachment size* setting is used to restrict the size of a file that can be attached to a forum posting. There is also a setting to prevent any attachment.
11. The *Maximum number of attachments* setting limits how many attachments can be added to a posting.
12. The *Display word count* option can be used to display the number of words in a posting.

The **Subscription and tracking** section allows the teacher to provide options to participants to subscribe or unsubscribe and to track read and unread forum postings.

### ▼ Subscription and tracking

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**Subscription mode** ⓘ Optional subscription ▼

**Read tracking** ⓘ Optional ▼

13. The *Subscription mode* setting enables the teacher to allow participants to decide if they want to subscribe to the forum (*Optional*); require everyone to be subscribed (*Forced*); automatically subscribe everyone but allow them to unsubscribe (*Auto subscribe*); and not allow anyone to subscribe (*Subscriptions not allowed*).
14. The options in the *Read tracking* setting allow students to choose whether to use this function (*Optional*) or whether it is always *On* or *Off*.

The **Post threshold for blocking** section can be used by teachers to restrict the number of postings a student can make.

### ▼ Post threshold for blocking

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**Time period for blocking** ⓘ Don't block ▼

**Post threshold for blocking** ⓘ 0

**Post threshold for warning** ⓘ 0

15. The Time period for blocking setting is used to specify the time period within which the student has a limited number of postings.
16. The Post threshold for blocking option sets the maximum number of postings in the specified time period.
17. The Post threshold for blocking setting specifies when a warning message is sent to students advising them they have a limited number of postings in this forum.

The **Ratings** section is used to rate students' forum postings and calculate a grade in the grade book.

## ▼ Ratings

**Roles with permission to rate** ⓘ Capability check not available until activity is saved

**Aggregate type** ⓘ No ratings ▼

**Scale** ⓘ Type Point ▼

Scale Default competence scale ▼

Maximum grade 100

**Restrict ratings to items with dates**   
in this range:

**From** 21 ▼ October ▼ 2016 ▼ 12 ▼ 30 ▼ 

**To** 21 ▼ October ▼ 2016 ▼ 12 ▼ 30 ▼ 

18. The *Roles with permission to rate* indicates who can rate postings. This can be changed using *Permission* link in the *Forum administration* section of the *Administration* block.
19. The options in the *Aggregate type* setting are used to specify how the grade book score is calculated. Options include the *average*, the number of ratings (*count*), the *maximum* rating, the *minimum* rating or the *sum* of the ratings. There will not be a score in the grade book if *No ratings* is selected.
20. The *Scale* setting specifies the maximum score for the rating.
21. The *Restrict rating to items with dates in this range* setting indicates when the ratings for the postings start and finish using the *From* and *To* options.

The **Common module settings** section is common to many Moodle activities and resources.

## ▼ Common module settings

**Visible** Show ▼

**ID number** ⓘ

**Group mode** ⓘ No groups ▼

**Grouping** ⓘ None ▼

Add group/grouping access restriction

22. The *Visible* setting is used to *Show/Hide* the activity. This is identical to using the *Show/Hide* icons when the *Turn editing on* function is enabled on a course home page.
23. The *ID Number* setting sets an ID number for advanced use of the grade book. (This is not used in the LINC courseware.)
24. The *Group* mode setting enables the use of groups. (More information is available in the *Groups* documentation in the Stage 3 *Course Management* section.)
25. The *Grouping* option enables the use of groupings (a collection of groups).

Settings in the **Restrict access** section can be used to limit access to the activity. (More information is available in the *Conditional Release* documentation in the Stage 3 *Course Management* section.)

## ▼ Restrict access

**Access restrictions**

None

Add restriction...

26. Upon selecting the *Add restriction...* button a pop up appears.

Add restriction...	
Date	Prevent access until (or from) a specified date and time.
Grade	Require students to achieve a specified grade.
Group	Allow only students who belong to a specified group, or all groups.
Grouping	Allow only students who belong to a group within a specified grouping.
User profile	Control access based on fields within the student's profile.
Restriction set	Add a set of nested restrictions to apply complex logic.
Cancel	

Settings in the **Activity completion** section are used to set completion tracking, grading options, posting requirements and the expected completion date. (More information is available in the *Completion Tracking* documentation in the Stage 3 *Course Management* section.)

27. Click the *Save and return to course* button to save/update the activity.

## Deployment Tips

- Consider adding a single, simple discussion forum if your forum task has a narrow focus. Students will not be able to add new topics.
- You can use single-member groups to create a private forum for journal writing and course-related communication between individual students and the teacher.
- Teachers should subscribe to all active forums and receive emails of all postings. This will make it easier to moderate forum activity.
- It is possible to record audio in a forum posting by starting a new posting, clicking *Add* in the *Attachments* section and using the *Record Audio* function in the *File picker* panel. More information about this features is available in the *Label module - Creating a Label (with audio)* document in the *Blending Learning by Adding Resources* section of the Stage 3 course. (Students can also use this feature.)
- Many tips and ideas about using forums in a class are available online. Try this search term: *Moodle forum tips*.