

## Adding a Chat Activity

The *Chat* activity module enables course participants to have text-based conversations in real time with other course participants. Because these conversations are synchronous (or in real time), participants need to be logged in at the same time to communicate with each other. *Chat* sessions can be organized into small groups or they can be accessed by each course participant.


Although participants need to be online to participate, the communication data in *Chat* sessions is saved and the resulting transcripts can be made available to all course participants or they can be restricted to users with permission to access them.

## Using the Chat Activity to Enhance Blended Learning

*Chat* activities provide students with an opportunity to interact outside of the classroom. This may be especially useful for classes that do not meet frequently. Advances in voice communication have reduced the need for this type of text communication; however, the *Chat* activity module provides an alternative mode of real-time communication for students unable to access online voice technology. Teachers may also be interested in its archiving feature, and use it to host a 'question and answer' session with a guest speaker or during regularly-scheduled online office hours.

## Step-by-Step Instructions for Adding this 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 *Chat* in the left panel under *ACTIVITIES*. 
4. Click the *Add* button.


The *Adding a new Chat* page appears.

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

### ▼ General

Name of this chat room\*

Description




Display description on course page

5. Type a descriptive name in the *Name of this chat room* text box. Click the *Show editing tools* tab in the *Description* text box to display the Text editor toolbar if needed.
6. Type the purpose of this *Chat* area and any other important information in the *Description* text box. Students will see this before they enter the chat.
7. To display the description on the course home page, select *Display description on course page*. (To keep the page less cluttered this is not recommended.)


The **Chat sessions** section sets the time of the chat and controls access to the chat transcript.

### ▼ Chat sessions

**Next chat time** 4  November  2016  12  00  

**Repeat/publish session times**

**Save past sessions**

**Everyone can view past sessions** 

8. The *Next chat time* setting is used to schedule the next chat session. This information will appear in the *Calendar* and *Upcoming events* block. (A *Chat* activity is always available to students unless it is hidden or access restrictions are imposed. (See below.)
9. Select *Don't publish any chat times* in the *Repeat/publish session times* option to have an open-ended, unscheduled chat activity. The options in this setting allow the scheduling of *Chat* sessions to be repeated daily, weekly or not at all (i.e. *No repeats - publish the specified time only*).
10. The *Save past sessions* setting specifies how long chat transcripts will be saved. Select *Never delete messages* to maintain a permanent archive.
11. Select *Yes* in the *Everyone can view past sessions* setting to allow students read-only access to a *Chat* session transcript. (Select *No* to prevent students from reading past *Chat* sessions transcripts.)

Settings in the **Common module** section are common to many Moodle activities and resources.

## ▼ Common module settings

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**Visible**  ▼

**ID number**

**Group mode**  ▼

12. 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.
13. The *ID Number* setting sets an ID number for advanced use of the grade book. (This is not used in the LINC courseware.)
14. The *Group* mode setting enables the use of groups. (More information is available in the *Groups* documentation in the *Stage 3 Course Management* section.)
15. 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

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**Access restrictions**

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.
<input type="button" value="Cancel"/>	

16. Settings in the **Activity completion** section are used to set completion tracking and the expected completion date. (More information is available in the *Completion*

17. Click the *Save and display* button to save/update the activity, or click the *Save and return to course* button. The *Chat* activity link appears on the course main page.

## Using a Chat Activity

Click a *Chat* activity on a course page.

The *Chat room* for that activity appears, showing three options:

The *Click here to enter the chat now* link opens the chat window.

The *Use more accessible interface* link opens the chat window that is suitable for older web browsers.

The *View past chat sessions* link provides access to the transcripts of previous *Chat* sessions. (Teachers can use the *Delete this session* option to delete specific *Chat* sessions.)

1. Click the link, *Click here to enter the chat now*.  
A new window opens.

1.

The screenshot displays a chat interface with two main sections: a 'CHAT AREA' on the left and a 'PARTICIPANT LIST' on the right. The chat area shows a sequence of messages:

- 15:40 Ed Linc: Ed Linc has just entered this chat.
- 15:40 Jorge Garcia: Jorge Garcia has just entered this chat.
- 15:42 Maria Guptaz: Maria Guptaz has just entered this chat.
- 15:43 Maria Guptaz: Hello everyone.
- 15:44 Ed Linc: Hi. Do you have any questions about this week's assignment.
- 15:45 Lee Chan: Ed, would you mind posting the web site you showed us last class?
- 15:46 Ed Linc: Yes, sure Lee.

The participant list on the right shows the following participants and their status:

- Lee Chan: Talk Beep
- Ed Linc: (Profile picture)
- Jorge Garcia: Talk Beep
- Maria Guptaz: Talk Beep

At the bottom of the chat area, there is a text input field with the placeholder text 'TYPE MESSAGE HERE', a 'Send' button, and a 'Themes' link. A red callout bubble with the text 'Click Send to post message' points to the 'Send' button.

A list of participants in the chat area appears in the right column.

Messages posted appear in the large area to the left of the participants.

Messages are typed at the bottom of the window in a text box.

The *Send* button next to the text box is clicked to post the message.

### Deployment Tips

- Consider posting any rules or etiquette you require students to follow in the *Introduction* text box.
- Saving the transcript could be useful for group work discussions or for the teacher to review the *Chat* session and monitor students' chat behaviour.
- The *Chat* activity works best with small groups.
- *Chat* sessions can be easily dominated by students who can type quickly. Implementing strategies to ensure everyone has access to a group may be beneficial.
- Different chat areas can be set up for the same course. They can be used for specific meetings at scheduled times, or they can be available at all times.
- The teacher can control who can view the chat transcripts.