

## Adding a Skype Synchronous Speaking Task

Millions of users world-wide use Skype to communicate for free via text, voice, and video over the Internet using a variety of web-enabled devices such as computers, tablets and smartphones. Skype also offers a popular paid service for calling landline telephones from web-enabled devices. The activities in the LINC courseware that are suitable for Skype can be completed using the free computer-to-computer service.

The *Skype* module in the LINC courseware provides a gateway to the Skype program, and it allows course participants to connect using the Skype software. They should also have a current version of the free Skype software installed on their computers. Course participants must have a free Skype account set up, and they must enter its credentials in their user profile to access this module in the courseware. Once entered in their profile, participants who click a Skype activity will see a list of other course participants with Skype accounts. This listing will display who is currently logged into Skype, and participants are able to begin a Skype conversation or conference with those who are online.

Because the synchronous speaking tasks in the courseware can be completed without Skype, e.g. by using other online technologies, the telephone or meeting face-to-face after class, they have been added to the courseware using *Page* resources. The courseware has one Skype activity listed at the top of each course, and all Skype tasks can be accessed using this module. The following step-by-step instructions explain how to add a Skype activity to a course. Instructions on how to add a speaking task using a *Page* resource are also included.

## Using Skype Synchronous Speaking Tasks to Enhance Blended Learning

Many students have limited opportunities to practice speaking English outside the classroom, so synchronous speaking tasks using the Skype module are a great way to provide additional structured speaking practice. Skype is suitable for both group and pair work. Students can be given projects to work on which requires them to do research and prepare a presentation. Skype allows them to collaborate outside of class in almost every step of a project, including brainstorming and planning, sharing ideas and research findings, writing group reports or wikis, giving each other feedback, and even practising oral presentations. Skype can also be used to prepare and practise role plays that can be demonstrated in the face-to-face class. In short, Skype or other similar technologies allow teachers to extend the classroom and assign ancillary speaking practice which can be followed up in the face-to-face class.

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

The *Adding a new skype* page appears.

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

## ▼ General

skype name\* 

Description



5. Type a descriptive name in the *skype name* text box.
6. Click the *Show editing tools* tab in the *Description* text box to display the Text editor toolbar if needed.
7. Type a description of the *Page* you are going to compose in the *Description* text box.
8. 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 **Custom example fieldset** section is used to specify a meeting time for a particular activity.

## ▼ Custom example fieldset

Next chat time      

9. The teacher can use the *Next chat time* drop-down menus (or the *Calendar* icon) to specify when course participants should meet. (The *Calendar* icon specifies only the date, not the meeting time.)

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

## ▼ Common module settings

Visible  

ID number 

Group mode   

10. 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.

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

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...

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 and the expected completion date. (More information is available in the *Completion Tracking* documentation in the *Stage 3 Course Management* section.)

13. Click the *Save and display* button to preview the activity.

## Step-by-Step Instructions for Adding a Skype Synchronous Speaking Task Using the Page Module

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 *Page* in the left panel under *RESOURCES*. 
4. Click the *Add* button.

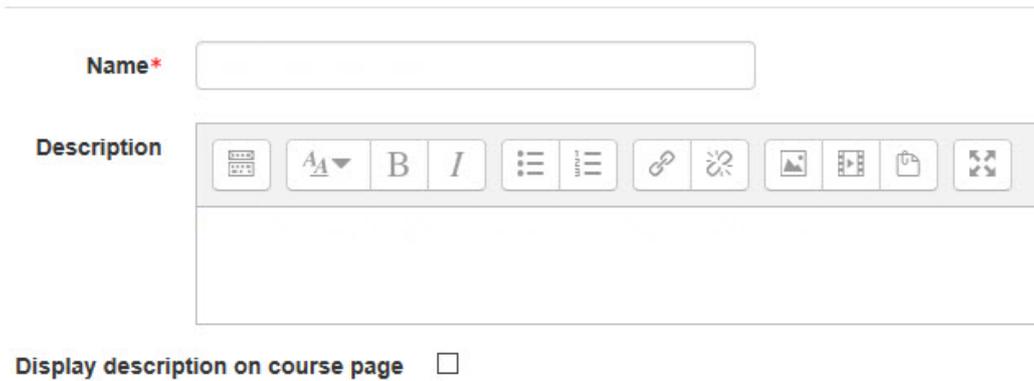
The *Adding a new Page* page appears.

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

### ▼ General

**Name\***

**Description**



**Display description on course page**

5. Type a descriptive name in the *Name* text box.
6. Type a description of the *Page* you are going to compose in the *Description* text box. Click the *Show editing tools* tab in the *Description* text box to display the Text editor toolbar if needed.
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 **Content** section is where the *Page* is composed.

### ▼ Content

**Page content\***



8. Compose the speaking prompt in the *Page content* text box in the *Content* section. (The Text editor is the same editor found in other Moodle tools).

For basic information about the Text editor, please refer to the Stage 2 course document, *Add a Page - with Contact Info.*, in the *Customizing and Creating Content* section.

More advanced information about composing a *Page* can be found in the *Page module - Composing a Web Page* document in the *Blending Learning by Adding Resources* section in the Stage 3 course.

Options in the **Appearance** section specify which information (in the **General** settings) appears at the top of this *Page*.

## ▼ Appearance

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Display page name

Display page description

9. Select the *Display page name* check box to show the *Page Name*.
10. Select the *Display page description* check box to show the *Page Description at the top of the Page*.

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

## ▼ Common module settings

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Visible  ▼

ID number 

11. 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.
12. The *ID Number* setting sets an ID number for advanced use of the grade book. (This is not used in the LINC courseware.)

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

None

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

Add restriction...	
Date	Prevent access until (or from) a specified date and time.
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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, a viewing requirement and the expected completion date. (More information is available in the *Completion Tracking* documentation in the Stage 3 *Course Management* section.)

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

## Deployment Tips

- It is important to keep in mind that students are not obliged to use Skype to do these tasks, especially in a blended learning context. Students can meet after class, communicate by telephone or use other free services available online, e.g. Yahoo Messenger, Google Hangout, Facetime, etc. The benefit of the *Skype* module is that it allows students to see if other students are online.
- Teachers and students concerned about privacy may want to create an account that they use exclusively with the LINC courseware. This makes it easier to separate course participants' work or study from their personal lives.
- Participants enter their Skype credentials in the *Skype ID* text box in the **Optional** section on the *Edit profile* page.