

JOURNALS

Journals are a personal space for students to communicate privately with you. Students can also use journals as a self-reflective tool to post their opinions, ideas, and concerns about the course, or discuss and analyze course related materials. You can create journal assignments that are broad and student-directed as your students reflect on the learning process and document changes in their perceptions and attitudes. Students can describe problems faced and how they solved them. Also, you can create instructor-directed journal entries that are more formal in nature and that narrow the focus by listing topics for discussion.

Journals are ideal for individual projects. For example, in a creative writing course, the owner of each journal creates entries and an instructor comments. In this manner, a student can refine a section of a writing assignment over a period of time, using an instructor's guidance and suggestions. A student can also comment on his or her entries to continue the conversation.

You can choose to make journal entries public, allowing all course members to view all entries. For example, you may choose to make a journal public when asking for opinions on how to improve the evaluation process. Students can read what other students wrote and build upon those ideas.

When used in the group area, members of a group can view and comment on each other's entries for the group journal. The group, as a whole, can communicate with you and all members benefit from the comments.

You can grade journal entries or use them solely for communication. In either instance, a student can make multiple entries for one journal topic.

BEST PRACTICE: BENEFITS OF REFLECTIVE LEARNING

Students can use a journal to collect observations, thoughts, concerns, notes, progress, and opinions that may not be shared otherwise. Journaling can build rapport between instructors and students, contributing to a positive learning experience.

As stated in an online article in *Educause Quarterly*, "Reflective learning can aid learners in synthesizing new information, and it is often used to improve reading comprehension, writing performance, and self-esteem via self-examination."¹



In the educational environment, journals need to be more than just a list of what a student did. The writing experience is used to communicate the thinking process: the how and why for each activity and thoughts about the activity at its conclusion.

The University of Worcester distributes a study skills advice sheet listing the benefits of reflective learning, which states: "Reflective learners are more likely to develop a deeper understanding of their subject and to achieve higher grades as a result."²

Reflective learners tend to:

- Be motivated—know what they are trying to achieve and why.
- Be proactive in extending their understanding of new topics and subjects.
- Use their existing knowledge to help them to develop their understanding of new ideas.
- Understand new concepts by relating them to their previous experiences.
- Understand that additional research and reading improves their understanding.
- Develop their learning and thinking by building on the critical evaluation of their previous learning experiences.
- Be self-aware, able to identify, explain, and address their strengths and weaknesses.

Sources

¹Phipps, Jonnie Jill. "E-Journaling: Achieving Interactive Education Online." *Educause Quarterly*. 28.1 (2005): n.pag. Web. 18 Nov. 2009.

²Learning Journals. University of Worcester, Aug. 2007. Web. 18 Nov. 2009.

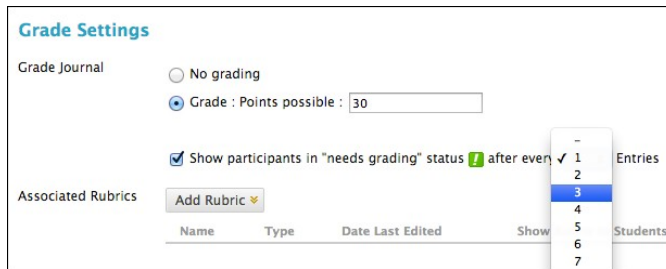
CREATING A JOURNAL

The journals tool offers students the opportunity to reflect on course content and communicate privately with you. You can use the tool to gauge understanding and guide students in their knowledge acquisition. Your comments can help students refine their writing and ideas.

You can create one or more journals for use by students in your course. You must create journal topics before students can add their entries.

HOW TO CREATE A JOURNAL

1. Change **Edit Mode** to **ON**.
2. On the **Control Panel**, expand the **Course Tools** section and select **Journals**.
3. On the **Journals** listing page, click **Create Journal** on the action bar.
4. On the **Create Journal** page, type a **Name** for the journal.
5. Type optional **Instructions** for the journal. Format the text and add images, links, multimedia, mashups, and attachments using the functions in the content editor, if needed. Attachments you add using the content editor can be launched in a new window and have alternate text added to describe the attachment. Any files you upload from your computer are saved in Course Files or the Content Collection in the top-level folder.
6. For **Journal Availability**, select the **Yes** option to make it available to users.
7. For **Journal Date and Time Restrictions**, you can set a journal to display on a specific date and time and to stop displaying on a specific date and time. Select the **Display After** and **Display Until** check boxes to enable the date and time selections. Use the pop-up **Date Selection Calendar** and **Time Selection Menu** to select dates and times or type dates and times in the boxes. Display restrictions do not affect the journal availability, only when it appears.
8. In the **Journal Settings** section, select **Monthly** or **Weekly Index Entries**.
 - Optionally, select the check box to **Allow Users to Edit and Delete Entries**.
 - Optionally, select the check box to **Allow Users to Delete Comments**.
 - Optionally, select the check box to **Permit Course Users to View Journal**. If selected, the journal becomes public. All users can view all journal entries made to the journal topic.
9. In the **Grade Settings** section, select **No grading** or the **Grade** option and type the number of **Points possible**. Points possible will apply to one or more entries made by the user to the journal topic. After you enable grading, a column is created automatically in the Grade Center. It is permanently gradable, and you cannot change the setting to **No grading**.
10. Optionally, select the check box for **Show participants in needs grading status** and select the number of entries required. Applying this setting will show the needs grading icon in the Grade Center and place the entries in the queue on the **Needs Grading** page after the specified number of entries are made.



11. Optionally, associate a rubric by pointing to **Add Rubric** to access the drop-down list.
12. Click **Submit**.

The journal topics appear in alphabetical order on the **Journals** listing page. You can sort columns by clicking the column title or caret.

You can also provide links to journals in course areas such as content areas, learning modules, lesson plans, and folders.

HOW TO CREATE JOURNAL ENTRIES

You and your students can create journal entries. Only you can comment on students' private entries. You and group members can comment on group entries.

On the **Journals** listing page, information is provided about each journal. Students can see if their entries are private—between the student and you—or public.

1. On the **Journals** listing page, select a journal title.
2. On the journal's topic page, click **Create Journal Entry** on the action bar.
3. On the **Create Journal Entry** page, type a **Title** for the journal entry.
4. Type text in the **Entry Message** box. Format the text and add images, links, multimedia, mashups, and attachments using the functions in the content editor, if needed. Attachments you add using the content editor can be launched in a new window and have alternate text added to describe the attachment.
5. In the **Journal Entry Files** section, browse for a file to attach to the journal entry.
6. Click **Post Entry** to submit the journal entry or click **Save Entry as Draft** to add the entry later.

VIEWING DRAFTS

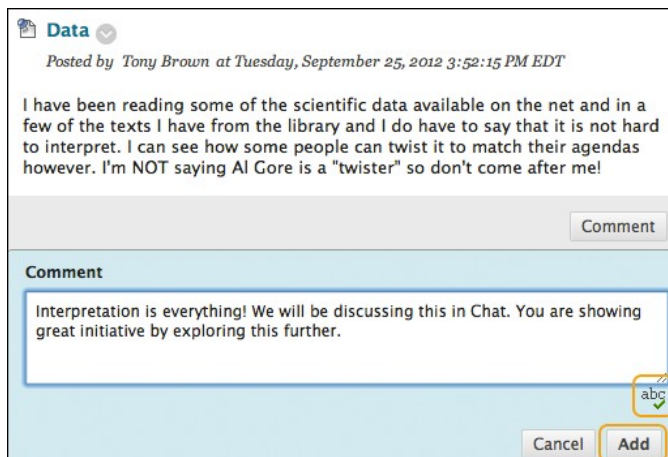
To view or add to saved drafts, click **View Drafts** on the action bar on the **Journals** listing page.

HOW TO COMMENT ON A JOURNAL ENTRY

Journaling can be essential for interaction between you and your students, especially in a web-based course. Student entries and your comments can help build rapport and can create a healthy intellectual exchange.

A student can make a comment after you comment on an entry to continue the conversation. Students cannot make comments on another student's journal entry, even if you made the journal public. Students can only comment on another student's entry when they are members of a group. For group journals, you and all group members are allowed to make comments on individual entries.

1. On the **Journals** listing page, select a journal title.
2. On the journal's topic page, select the journal entry to view by selecting the user's name in the side panel in the **More Journals** section. The user's journal entry opens in the content frame.
3. Click **Comment** following the user's entry. The **Comment** box appears.
4. Type a comment in the **Comment** box.
5. Click spell check at the bottom of the **Comment** box to check the spelling of the content before continuing.
6. Click **Add**. Click the **Comments** link below the entry to view the comment.



The screenshot shows a journal entry titled "Data" posted by Tony Brown on Tuesday, September 25, 2012 at 3:52:15 PM EDT. The entry text reads: "I have been reading some of the scientific data available on the net and in a few of the texts I have from the library and I do have to say that it is not hard to interpret. I can see how some people can twist it to match their agendas however. I'm NOT saying Al Gore is a "twister" so don't come after me!". Below the entry is a "Comment" button. A comment box is open, containing the text: "Interpretation is everything! We will be discussing this in Chat. You are showing great initiative by exploring this further." The comment box has a spell check icon (abc) and a green checkmark. At the bottom of the comment box are "Cancel" and "Add" buttons.

EDITING AND MANAGING JOURNALS

You can edit basic properties of a journal topic, including the name, instructions, availability, and some settings. You can also edit any user's journal entries and delete journal topics and comments.

HOW TO EDIT A JOURNAL

1. Change **Edit Mode** to **ON**.
2. On the **Journals** listing page, access a journal's contextual menu.
3. Select **Edit**.
4. On the **Edit Journal** page, make changes.
5. Click **Submit**.

HOW TO DELETE A JOURNAL

If you no longer need a journal, you can delete it. Deleting a journal is permanent. On the **Journals** listing page, select **Delete** from the journal's contextual menu.

NOTE: If a journal is gradable, the **Delete Confirmation** page appears. You need to perform extra steps to remove a gradable journal.

1. Change **Edit Mode** to **ON**.
2. On the **Journals** listing page, access a journal's contextual menu.
3. Select **Delete**.
4. Click **OK** in the warning pop-up. The **Delete Confirmation** page appears. You have two options:
 - **Do not select check boxes:** The journal is deleted, but the Grade Center column and scores you have assigned are retained. For example, all student entries are graded and you want to keep the Grade Center column for the final grade calculations. If you delete a journal, yet retain the Grade Center column, you can delete that column from the Grade Center at any time.
 - **Select the check boxes:** The grade column in the Grade Center **and** the journal are deleted. For example, if you do not want to include the grade column for the journal entries in the final grade, you can safely delete all.

Delete Confirmation

Cancel Remove

1. Delete Grade Column

Warning: The following Blogs are listed in the Grade Center. To delete the Grade Center column and all grades for the Blog, select the check box below for the Blog. This action cannot be undone. To prevent grades for a Blog from being deleted, leave the check box blank.

Grade Center Column

Space Exploration

5. Click **Remove** to complete the deletion.

HOW TO CHANGE THE AVAILABILITY OF A JOURNAL

1. Change **Edit Mode** to **ON**.
2. On the **Journals** listing page, select the check box next to the appropriate journal.
3. Point to **Availability** on the action bar to access the drop-down list.
4. Select **Make Available** or **Make Unavailable**.

HOW TO ADD A JOURNALS LINK TO THE COURSE MENU

If you want students to access the journals tool often, you can add a link to the course menu for one-click access to the tool. You can customize the name of the link as needed.

1. Change **Edit Mode** to **ON** and point to the plus sign above the course menu. The **Add Menu** Item drop-down list appears.
2. Select **Tool Link**.
3. Type a **Name** for the link.
4. From the **Type** drop-down list, select **Journals**.
5. Select the **Available to Users** check box.
6. Click **Submit**.

TROUBLESHOOTING JOURNAL MANAGEMENT

If	Then
You delete a journal while users are posting	The journal and all comments are deleted.
You make journal unavailable while users are posting	The journal remains visible to you in Edit Mode, but does not appear to users.
You change the Allow Users to Edit and Delete Entries setting	Entries remain, but users cannot edit them.
You change the Allow Users to Delete Comments setting	Comments remain, but users cannot delete them.
You enable journal grading	You cannot change this setting. Delete the journal and the Grade Center column to remove it. If you need the journal entries, but not the grades, you can decide to not include the Grade Center column for the journal in Grade Center calculations.

GRADE JOURNALS

You can grade participation in journals for individuals and groups.

When you enable grading, a column is created automatically in the Grade Center. You grade students' journal entries from the journal topic page. All of an individual student's entries and comments appear as you determine the grade. The grades show immediately in the Grade Center.

You access the journal topic page in the following ways:

- In the journals tool, access a journal. In the sidebar, click the drop-down with your name to access all course members.
- On the **Needs Grading** page, access a journal's contextual menu and click **Grade All Users**.
- In the Grade Center, locate the column for the journal you want to grade. Move the mouse pointer over a cell containing the needs grading icon—the exclamation mark—to access the journal's contextual menu. Click **Grade User Activity**.

You can decide whether or not students can view their grades and feedback in **My Grades** by editing the column information in the Grade Center.

When you edit an assigned grade from the journal topic page, the Grade Center is updated.

CHANGE A TOPIC FROM GRADED TO UNGRADED

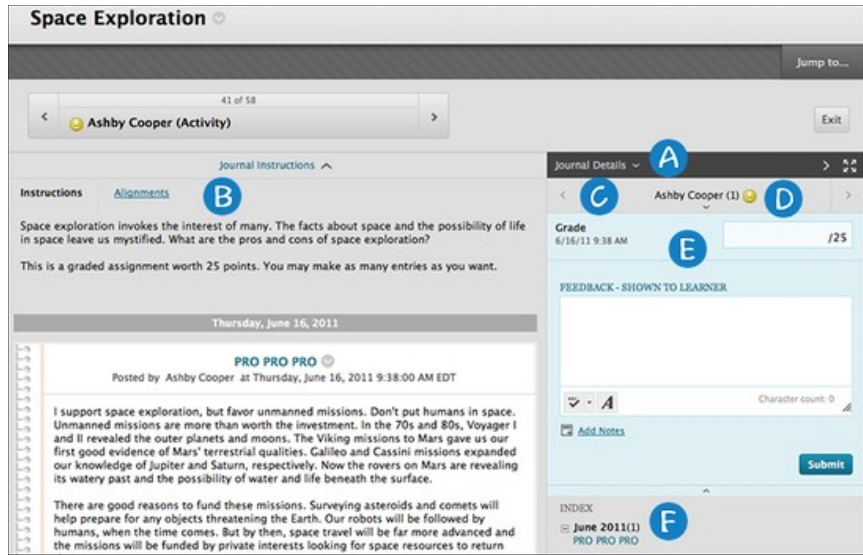
You cannot change a graded journal topic to ungraded. You need to delete the graded journal topic from the **Journals** listing page and the Grade Center, and create a new ungraded topic.

Alternatively, to retain entries, set the journal's Grade Center column to not be included in calculations. In essence, the journal continues to be considered graded by the Grade Center, but any results or grades assigned are ignored.

THE JOURNAL TOPIC PAGE

The journal topic page is divided into two main sections. You can view the entries in the content frame. In the sidebar, you can view information about the journal topic or entry, expand the **Index**, grade the entry if the journal is gradable, and select an individual user's name to view his or her entries alone in the content frame.

NOTE: If you do not see the grading feature in the sidebar, your school has not turned it on.



- A. In the sidebar, you can expand the **Journal Details** section to display information about the current selection, including the number of entries and comments. Click the right-pointing arrow to collapse the sidebar for more viewing room for entries. Click the four arrows to view the journal entries and sidebar in full screen.
- B. Below the action bar, the **Journal Instructions** are expanded by default. You can minimize them. Click **Alignments** to add alignments.
- C. To view all course members, click the down-pointing arrow next to the user's name to view a list and select a member. The selected member's entries appear in the content frame. Use the left- and right-pointing arrows to navigate to the previous or next student. Optionally, click **Show Empty Journals**.
- D. For graded journals, icons designate the status of a user's activity. The needs grading icon—the exclamation mark—indicates that a user has met the minimum activity for grading you set for the journal. The in progress icon appears when a user has some activity, but has not yet met the minimum number required to trigger needs grading status.
- E. In the grading sidebar, provide a grade and feedback for the student.
- F. The **Index** section displays the titles of the entries created by an author during the selected time period. Click the minus sign to collapse the title list.

HOW TO GRADE JOURNAL ENTRIES FOR INDIVIDUALS

You can begin the grading process for journals from the Grade Center, the **Needs Grading** page, and the **Course Tools** section in the **Control Panel**.

While specifying journal settings, if you did NOT select the **Show participants in needs grading status** box and select a minimum number of entries, the needs grading icon will not appear in the Grade Center, on the journal topic page, and items do not appear on the **Needs Grading** page.

The in progress icon shows in the Grade Center cell and in a journal:

- For student activity that does not meet the minimum number you set.
- If you did not select the **Show participants in needs grading status** check box.

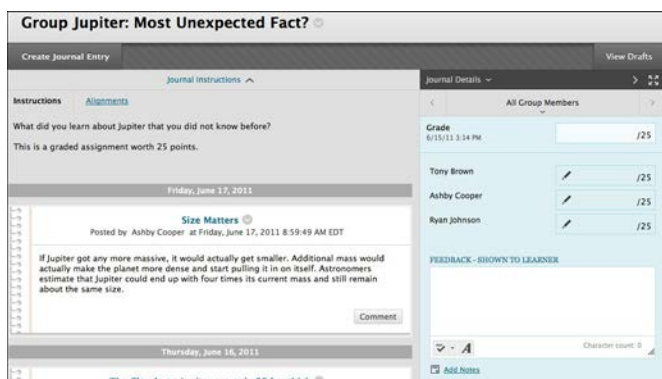
Use the following steps to grade journal entries:

1. Access the journal topic page and click the drop-down list with your name to access all course members. Click a user's name with a number. The user's journal entry or entries open in the content frame.
2. Type a point total in the **Grade** box. If you associated a rubric for this graded journal, expand and complete the rubric. To edit an existing grade, click in the **Grade** box and change the grade.
3. Optionally, type **Feedback** for the student. In the **Add Notes** section, make notes that appear only to you and the grader role. The icon for **Click to open full content editor** gives you access to all the content editor functions.
4. Click **Submit** to add the grade, feedback, and grading notes to the Grade Center.

GROUP JOURNAL GRADING

You grade a group journal using the same steps as for individuals. When the entries are submitted, all group members' names appear with the exclamation mark, the needs grading icon.

When you add a grade for a group journal, the grade is automatically given to all the members of the group and is populated in the corresponding column in the Grade Center for each group member. All members are assigned the same grade, even if a member did not contribute, although you can change this grade.



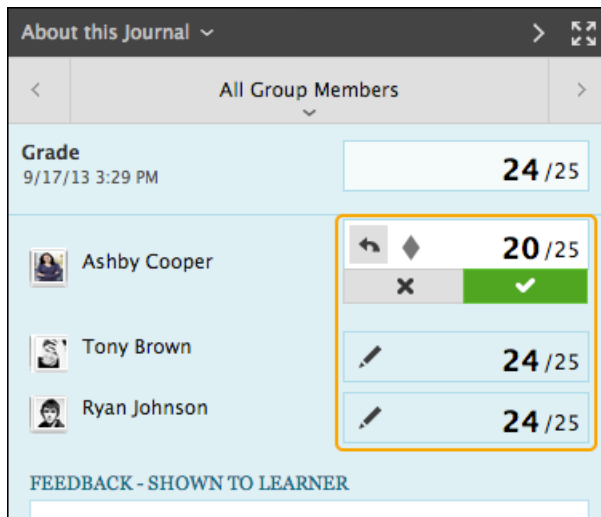
On the journal topic page, you can read all the entries for a group journal and add one grade. Users with entries that need grading are indicated with the needs grading icon—the exclamation mark—in the Grade Center and on the journal topic page in the **All Group Members** drop-down list. In addition, the group journal is listed on the **Needs Grading** page.

Students can view their group journal grades in **My Grades** and on the group journal topic page by selecting their names.

CHANGE AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER'S GROUP GRADE

You can assign an individual group member a different grade than the group by editing the member's grade. If you change a group member's grade, and you assign a new group grade, the new group grade will not affect the individual's new grade. Individual members only see one grade, not what each member earned. The individual's new grade will not appear to the other group members.

In the grading sidebar, click the pencil icon to change the group grade for a member. Type a new grade and click the check mark icon to save it. This grade becomes an override grade.



The group grade and the individual group member's edited grade also appear in the Grade Center. Grayed out cells appear in the group journal column for course members who are not part of the group.

REVERT A MEMBER'S EDITED GRADE

You can revert a member's edited grade to the original group grade, which all group members received.

In the grading sidebar, click the pencil icon for the user with the edited grade. Click the left-pointing arrow to change the grade to the original group grade. The override icon is removed. The change also appears in the Grade Center.