

DISCUSSION BOARD

Online discussions provide some unique benefits. Because students can take time to ponder before posting ideas, you may see more thoughtful conversations play out. You can observe as students demonstrate their grasp of the material and correct misconceptions. You can extend your office hours by reaching students more often during the week so learning is continuous.

Building a sense of community among students is crucial for a successful online experience. With the discussion board tool, course members can replicate the robust discussions that take place in the traditional classroom. Discussions can serve a range of purposes, such as:

- An online meeting place for social interaction among peers.
- An additional medium for collaboration and the exchange of ideas.
- A medium to pose questions about homework assignments, readings, and course content.
- A way to demonstrate the understanding or application of course material.
- A record of discussion that members can review at a later point.
- A graded activity that demonstrates understanding or application of course material.

FLEXIBLE AND REFLECTIVE COMMUNICATION

After you determine what you need, you can create asynchronous interactions occurring over extended periods of time. This allows for more flexibility, as well as reflective communication.

Asynchronous communication offers convenience and flexibility to all participants. Some benefits include:

- Participants do not need to be in the same location or time zone.
- Participants can carefully consider and reflect on the initial message before responding. Hopefully, more thoughtful conversations can occur.
- You can accommodate different learning styles. For example, students who are shy about speaking in class may feel more comfortable responding to discussion threads.

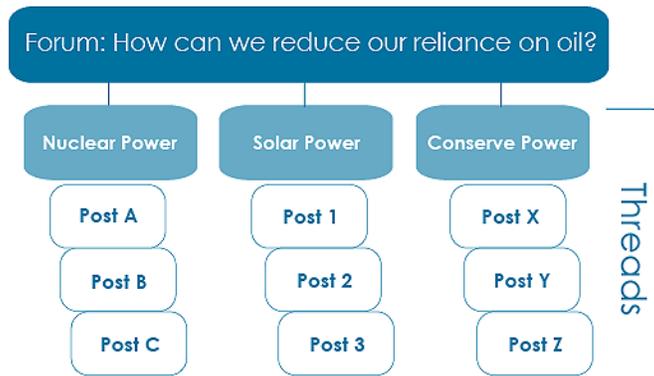
For smaller course groups, you can also offer the group discussion board tool, available only to the members of the group.

ABOUT FORUMS AND THREADS

Just as it is critical to plan and structure your course content, you need to provide structure for online discussions.

The main discussion board page displays a list of forums. A **forum** is an area where participants discuss a topic or a group of related topics. Within each forum, participants can create multiple threads. A **thread** includes the initial post and all replies to it.

The discussions are logged and displayed sequentially so all course members can follow the conversation.



ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BOARD PAGE

The discussion board is commonly accessed from the course menu, although you can provide a link to it in another course area, such as in a content area.

The **Discussion Board** page contains a list of all the forums you have created for your course. You must first create one or more forums before message threads can be started.

On the action bar, create forums and use the search function to search for discussion board content. By default, the search field appears collapsed to save screen space.

A. To sort a column, click the column heading. For example, if you sort the **Forum** column, the items appear in alphabetical or reverse alphabetical order.

B. To view the posts, click the forum title. Forum titles in bold type contain unread posts.

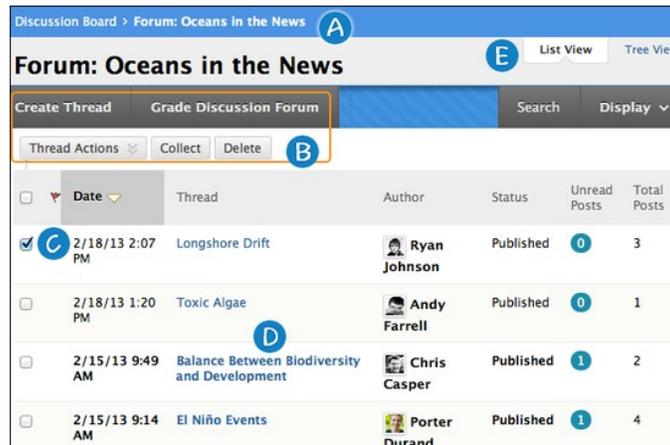
C. For each forum, view the total number of posts, the number of unread posts, and the number of users who have participated in the forum. For one-click access to the forum's unread messages, click the link in the **Unread Posts** column.

Forum	Description	Total Posts	Unread Posts	Total Participants
Oceans in the News	This week, please post a link to a relevant news article related to oceanography or marine biology.	19	7	13
Wave Assignment: Energy From Waves and Tides	Explore harnessing energy from waves and tides. Please narrow your topic to a specific aspect such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">How could the energy be extracted?could a reliable "model" be made and relied upon? sustainability?What research is out there?Existing, working energy projects This required assignment is worth 50 points.	15	3	11

ABOUT A DISCUSSION FORUM

When you access a forum, a list of threads appears. The columns display information for each thread, such as date created, author, and status.

To sort a column, click the column heading or caret.

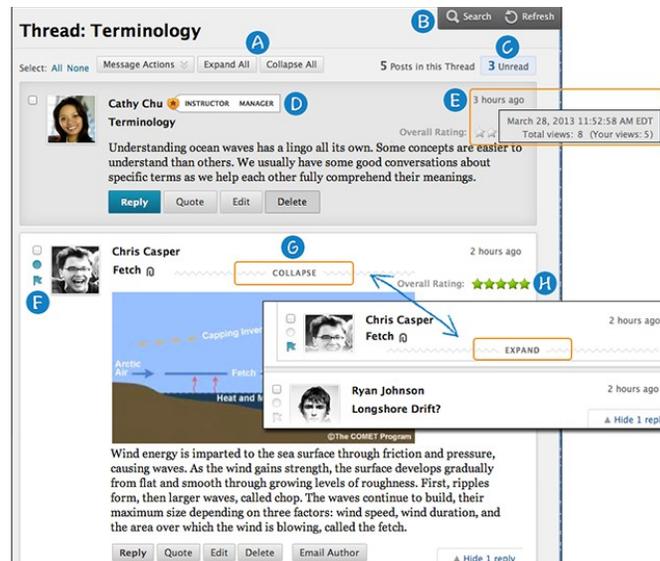


- A. When possible, use the orientation bar to navigate to a previous page. Do not use the browser navigation controls because page load errors may occur.
- B. Use the action bar functions to perform various actions, such as creating threads, grading forum contributions, collecting threads, and searching content.
- C. Select multiple threads' check boxes or select the check box in the header row to select all threads for an action, such as deleting.
- D. Click a thread title to read the posts. Titles containing unread posts appear in bold type.
- E. Determine your view. You can view a forum with threads appearing in a list -OR- in a tree view with all posts listed below each thread title.

ABOUT A DISCUSSION THREAD

When you view the thread page, all posts and the thread description appear on one page. Thread descriptions are often used as prompts for discussion, so they are now visible where users are posting. Large images of course members help you easily identify authors.

To help make replying easy, the content editor appears immediately below the message you are replying to. You are not taken to a new page to post a reply, allowing you to refer to any post on the page.



- A. Use **Expand All** and **Collapse All** to manage the visibility of posts on the page.
- B. Functions appear when you point to the page. Move your mouse pointer anywhere on the page and action bar functions appear at the top, such as **Search** and **Refresh**.
- C. Click the number of unread posts to view a page containing only the unread posts in a thread.
- D. When viewing threads, a badge appears next to a forum manager or moderator's name. Point to the badge to see the user's course role and forum role. If your institution has custom roles, they are displayed. Role highlighting is available only in the discussion board.
- E. The dates for posts appear as relative dates such as "7 days ago." When you point to the relative date, you can view the absolute date of creation or editing and the number of views.
- F. New **Mark as Read** indicator: Blue icon = **unread**. White icon = **read**. Posts are marked as read as you scroll down the page, after a slight delay. Only expanded posts that you view onscreen are marked as read. Posts are not automatically marked read by quickly scrolling down the page. Click the icon to manually change the status of a message. You can also flag posts you want to review again later or indicate as important.
- G. Point to a post, **Reply**, **Quote**, **Expand/Collapse**, and other available functions appear. Click **Collapse** to fold up a post. This increases the vertical screen space available for viewing posts.
- H. If you enabled the rate posts feature in a forum's settings, **Overall Rating** shows the average rating for a post. When you point to the rating area, it changes to show **Your Rating**.