CREATE FORUMS

A discussion board forum is an area where participants discuss a topic or a group of related topics. Within each forum, users can create multiple threads. A thread includes the initial post and all replies to it. You can create forums and threads to organize discussions into units or topics relevant to your course. To distinguish between forums and threads, see About Forums and Threads.

Forum settings allow you to use the discussion board in different ways. For example, to control a forum, an instructor creates all threads, moderates, and grades the posts. For a student-led discussion, you can allow students to create new threads with the option of posting anonymously. You can also create "post first" forums where you ask students to respond before they can read their classmates' posts.

THE CREATE FORUM PAGE

The forum description you provide appears when users create a thread and when they encounter a thread with the post first setting. Forum descriptions are often used as prompts for discussion and are visible where users are posting.

You can choose between **Standard View**, the default, and **Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum**, which is the post first setting.

Forum settings are grouped into related areas on the page, making it easier to scan and select options. Settings that are not available based on the current selections are grayed-out or have strike-through text.

For example, when you apply the post first setting, various settings are automatically set and made unavailable for change to maintain the integrity of the post first capability. An author is not allowed to delete his own posts to avoid a student posting something first to see others' posts, and then editing their post after the fact.

HOW TO CREATE FORUMS

1. Access the discussion board.

2. On the **Discussion Board** page, click **Create Forum** on the action bar.

3. On the **Create Forum** page, type a **Name**. Provide a descriptive and unique name because users click this name to access the forum.

4. Optionally, type instructions or a description in the **Description** box. The **Description** appears below the forum name on the **Discussion Board** page. Forum descriptions are often used as prompts for discussion and are visible where users are posting.

5. In the **Forum Availability** section, select **Yes** to make the forum available to users.
    Tip: You can create forums ahead of time and set the availability to **No** until the discussion is ready to start.

6. For **Enter Date and Time Restrictions**, you can set forums 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 forum availability, only when it appears.

7. Select the **Forum Settings** based on your specific needs.

VIEWING THREADS/REPLIES SETTINGS

To promote originality, creativity, and a variety of responses, you can select P**articipants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum**, which is the post first setting. Students must respond before they can read their classmates' posts.

In **Standard View**, users can see all previously created threads in the forum.

GRADE SETTINGS

You can create a graded forum or thread and a column is created automatically in the Grade Center.

Select **Grade Discussion Forum** and type a point value to evaluate participants on performance throughout a forum.

Select **Grade Threads** to evaluate participants on performance in each thread.

If you are grading posts and want to retain the posts as they were at the time of grading, clear the check box for **Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts**. To learn more about which forum settings to choose to fit your pedagogical requirements, see Set Up Discussions.

If you enable grading for the forum, select the check box for **Show participants in needs grading status** and select the number of posts from the drop-down list. Applying this setting displays the needs grading icon in the Grade Center and places the posts in the queue on the **Needs Grading** page after users make the specified number of posts. If you select a grading option and do NOT select the check box, the needs grading icon does not appear in the Grade Center and posts do not appear on the **Needs Grading** page.

> *Note*: If you choose three posts from the drop-down list and a user submits two, the in progress icon appears in the Grade Center cell and the discussion board until the specified number of posts is met.
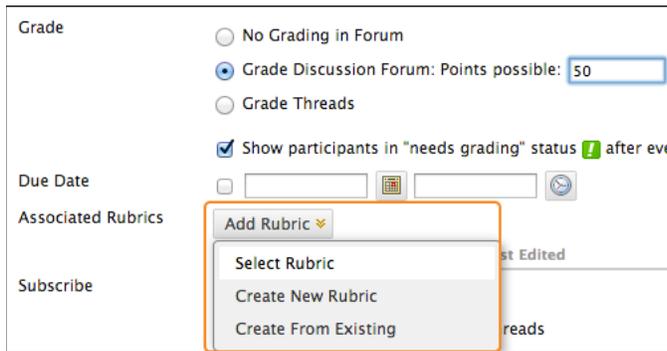
DUE DATE AND RUBRIC SETTINGS

When grading is enabled, you can select a **Due Date**. Due dates are used to organize and assign gradable items to grading periods in the Grade Center. Graded posts made after the due date are marked **LATE** on the **Grade Details** page in the Grade Center and on the **Needs Grading** page.

You can also associate a rubric to use for grading by pointing to Add Rubric.

8. Click **Submit**.

On the **Discussion Board** page, the new forum appears at the bottom of the list. To learn how to change the order of forums, see How to Reorder Discussion Forums.

LIST VIEW AND TREE VIEW

After you click a forum title, a page loads displaying all forum threads. View the page in either list view or tree view. This choice remains in effect until you change it. You may change it at any time. Change the view on the forum page, in the upper-right corner.
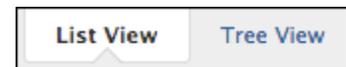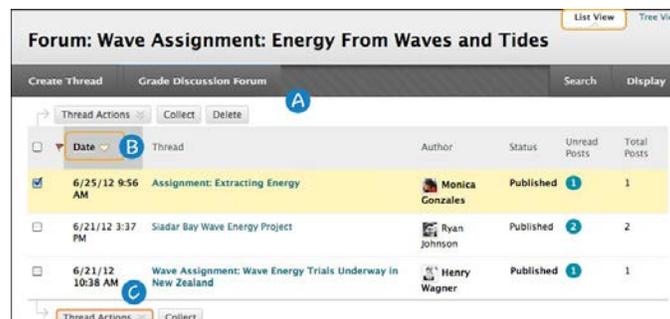

LIST VIEW

Click List View to present the threads in a table format. Threads containing any unread posts appear in bold type.

1. From the action bar, you can create threads, collect, or delete posts.
   Note: Depending on the settings you made when creating the forum, different functions appear on the action bar. For example, if you allowed tagging, a **Tags** function appears. If you enabled email subscription for the forum, a **Subscribe** function appears.

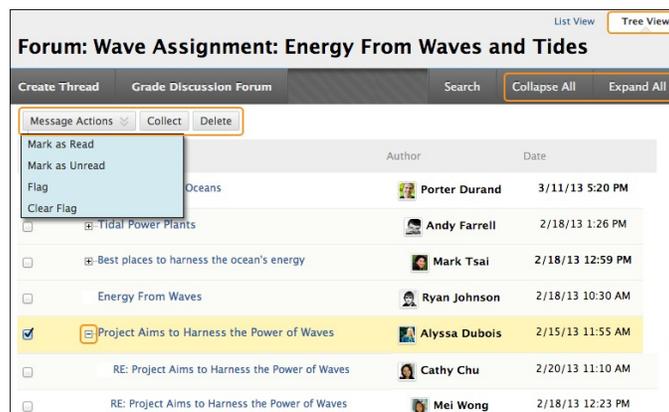2. To sort a column, click the column heading or caret.

3. Select the check box next to a thread and make a selection from the **Thread Actions** drop-down list. You can select multiple threads or select the check box in the header to select all threads. The actions include:

   • Marking threads read or unread.
   • Setting or clearing flags. Flags mark threads for later attention.
   • Editing the status of the selected threads.
   • Subscribing or unsubscribing for email alerts to new posts made to selected threads, if enabled.
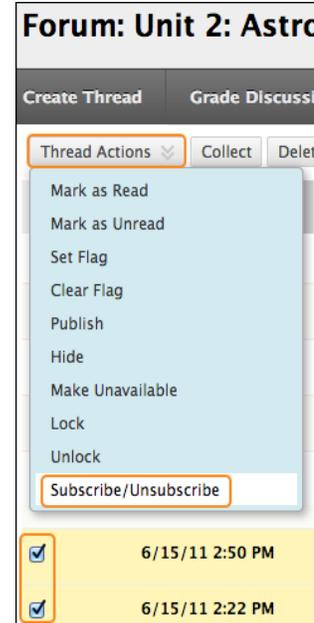
TREE VIEW

Click **Tree View** to show the thread starter messages and their replies. From the action bar, you can create threads, collect, or delete posts.

Expand and collapse threads with the plus and minus icons next to the titles. If a thread starter message contains unread posts, the thread starter title appears in bold type. On the action bar, use the **Collapse All** and **Expand All** functions to hide or see all posts included in all threads.

Select the check box next to a thread and make a selection from the **Message Actions** drop-down list on the action bar. You can select multiple threads or select the check box in the header to select all threads. Actions include marking threads read or unread and setting or clearing flags. Flags mark threads for later attention.

HOW TO ALLOW EMAIL ALERTS FOR NEW DISCUSSION POSTS

When you enable email subscription, students can receive email alerts for new posts or replies. You can allow students to subscribe to an entire forum or to specific threads within a forum.

When you first create a forum or when you edit the forum settings, you select the options for subscriptions to forums or threads.

1. Access a forum's contextual menu.
2. Select **Edit**.
3. On the **Edit Forum** page, in the **Forum Settings** section, select the **Subscribe** options.
   1. *Allow members to subscribe to threads*: Users can select specific threads within the forum.
   2. *Allow members to subscribe to forum*: Users can subscribe to all threads within the forum.
   3. *Include body of post in the email*: Displays the message text and a link to reply to the message in the email notification.
   4. *Include link to post*: Displays a link to the message in the email notification.
1. Click **Submit**.

CREATE THREADS

In a discussion board forum, you can start new threads to begin a conversation. A thread includes the initial post and all replies to it. When you create a forum, you can allow or not allow members to start threads. Generally, the purpose of the forum dictates whether members can start threads. A moderated, graded forum used to evaluate student performance is usually tightly controlled, and members cannot create threads. Other forums are designed for members to share opinions and thoughts on tangential or unrelated topics. In this case, you might allow members to create threads and spark discussions.

To help organize your view, you can change the status of existing threads and determine which threads appear in a forum.

Note: Instructors and students create threads in the same way. If you enabled grading, you can also set the thread to be graded.

Example 1	Example 2
You create a forum that addresses a broad subject, such as "Addicted to Oil." Next, you create two threads containing the specific issues to be discussed, such as replacing oil usage with nuclear power, and the pros and cons of conservation. To ensure students post only to existing threads, consider disallowing thread creation in the forum settings.	You create a forum and ask a question or provide the instructions or details in the description, such as "How can we reduce our reliance on oil?" Then, students create threads for each solution to the problem of oil addiction. All members post to existing threads to comment on given answers or create new threads to present new solutions. In the forum settings, be sure you select the **Allow Members to Create New Threads** option.
	Note: If you enable thread grading, members cannot create new threads.

HOW TO CREATE THREADS

In the following example, you create a graded thread.

Note: Files uploaded by students are not saved in the course repository.

1. Access a discussion board forum.

2. On the action bar, click **Create Thread**. Forum descriptions display when users create a thread and when they encounter a thread with the post first setting. Forum descriptions are often used as prompts for discussion, so they are now visible where users are posting.

3. On the **Create Thread** page, type a **Subject**.

4. Type instructions, a description, or a question in the **Message** box.

5. To attach a file, in the **Attachments** section, attach a file using one of the following options:

   - To upload a file from your computer, click **Browse My Computer**.

   - To upload a file from the course's storage repository:

     ▪ Click **Browse Course**.

       -OR-

     ▪ Click **Browse Content Collection**.

6. If you chose to grade threads when you created the forum, you decide on a thread-by-thread basis whether to grade a thread. In the **Grading** section, select the check box for **Grade Thread** and type **Points possible**. Select the check box for **Show participants in needs grading status** and select the number of posts from the drop-down list. Applying this setting displays the needs grading icon in the Grade Center and places the posts in the queue on the **Needs Grading** page after users make the specified number of posts. If you select a grading option and do NOT select the check box, the needs grading icon does not appear in the Grade Center and posts do not appear on the **Needs Grading** page.

   Note: If you choose three posts from the drop-down list and a user submits two, the in progress icon appears in the Grade Center cell and the discussion board until the specified number of posts is met. You can also associate a rubric to use for grading by pointing to **Add Rubric**.

7. Click **Save Draft** to store a draft of the post or click **Submit** to create the thread.

The newly created thread appears in the forum.

If you enabled thread grading, two functions appear in the **Grade** column:

1. Click **Grade Thread** to evaluate the posts.
2. Click **Grade** to enable grading for a thread and assign a value.

HOW TO CHANGE A THREAD'S STATUS

You can change the status of a thread to keep students focused on relevant discussions and to help organize a forum containing many threads. When a user creates and submits a thread, it is assigned the Published status.

The following table describes which thread status to select to accomplish various objectives.

Status	Goal for Thread
Publish	Make a thread available to all users.
Hide	Hide a thread from immediate view, but still allow users the option of reading the thread. Unneeded content is hidden from view, helping users find relevant content. Users cannot reply to or edit hidden threads even if editing is enabled for the thread. Users can view hidden threads using the Display drop-down list on the action bar. When you do not want the thread hidden, change the status to Publish.
Make Unavailable	Hide a thread from view of all users except forum managers.
Lock	Allow users to read a thread, but not edit or add to it. Locking a thread allows you to assign grades without users updating or changing posts.
Unlock	Unlock a locked thread to select another status.

Use the following steps to change the status of a thread or multiple threads at one time.

Note: Alternatively, access a thread's contextual menu and select a thread status.

1. Access a forum and change to **List View**, if needed.

2. Select the check box next to each thread requiring a change of status. You can select multiple threads or select the check box in the header to select all threads.

3. From the **Thread Actions** drop-down list, select a new status for the selected thread or threads.

The status for each thread appears in the **Status** column. If you save a draft of a thread to edit in the future, **Draft** appears in the **Status** column. To access your drafts, you must select **Show All** or **Drafts Only** from the **Display** drop-down list on the action bar.
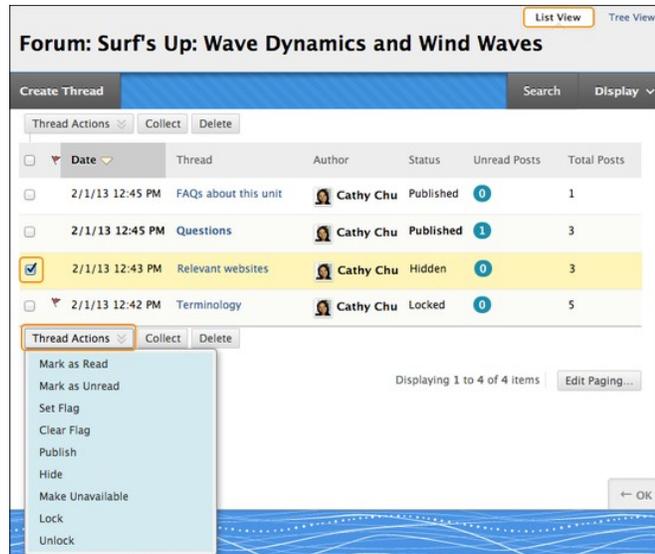
HOW TO CHANGE WHICH THREADS APPEAR

If you have many threads in a forum and assign different statuses to the threads, you can choose which threads appear in a forum. For example, if you start several threads and save them as drafts, you can choose to show only those drafts and select the threads to edit and publish.

1. Access the forum and change to **List View**, if needed.

2. On the action bar, point to **Display** to access the drop-down list.

3. Select the type of threads to view in the forum.
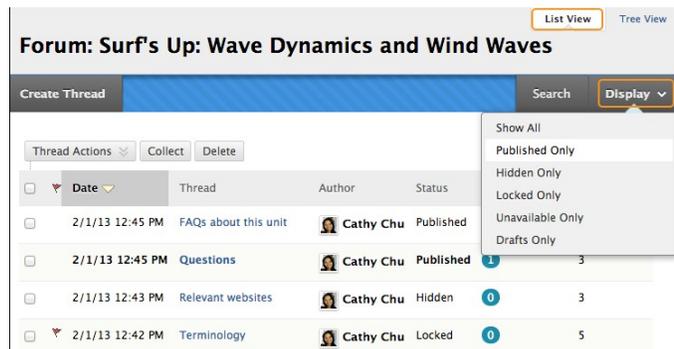
The forum page displays only those threads that have the status selected from the Display drop- down list.

SAVE A POST AS A DRAFT TO SUBMIT LATER

The **Save Draft** function is available if you need to return to your post at a later time. This function saves your comments and files on the page.

To access your post later, return to the forum page and point to Display to access the drop-down list. Select **Drafts Only** to view the saved post. While viewing your post, point to it to view the functions for **Edit** and **Delete**. When you click **Edit**, the content editor opens.

You can make edits, add or delete files, and use the functions in the content editor. Click **Submit** to publish the post.