

Discussion Board Overview

Introduction

The Discussion Board tool enables asynchronous, reflective online discussion by a whole class or within groups. Each Blackboard course contains a class Discussion Board by default. Within this board, multiple Forums can be built. Within each Forum, users post and read threads and/or replies to threads. Replies (and replies to replies) are indented or “threaded” to show their relationship to other messages.

Two ways to organize ongoing weekly online discussion

1. Create a Forum for each topic or week. This is useful when multiple discussion participation grades will be assigned as only one grade per student can be assigned for each forum. If enabled, students can create their own threads (as opposed to replies only), which is useful for broader topics or topics with multiple components or perspectives.
2. Use one Forum and disable the ability to create new threads. The instructor posts a thread for each topic and students may only reply. This keeps the discussion in one Forum and limits each topic to a single thread.

Note: to create a new topic thread, instructors must enable the ability to create new threads, then disable it again directly after posting the thread.

Other Forum capabilities

- A grade may be applied for each student within a Forum.
- There is a Subscription function that enables users to receive email notification of forum or thread (within a forum) messages.
- Forums may be moderated. (Instructors must review and publish messages before they display in a Forum.)
- Forums messages may be peer rated. (Star rating)
- Group Discussion Boards contain a Forum by default. Users may create more Forums.

Caution

- Unlike the Journal, Blog, and Wiki tools, Discussion Boards cannot be created under the Course Tools Discussion Board link.
- There is a discrepancy between the Forums that display in the Course Menu Discussion Board link and those that display in the Course Tools Discussion Board link. Group Forums display in the Course Tools Discussion Board only.
- Forums *created* under Content Areas belong to the course Discussion Board.
- Deleting Forums created in Content Areas requires deleting them from the Course Tools Discussion Board under the Course Menu Discussions link as well.

Read Messages

The discussion board has two views. These can be accessed by clicking their links in the upper right of a Forum main page.

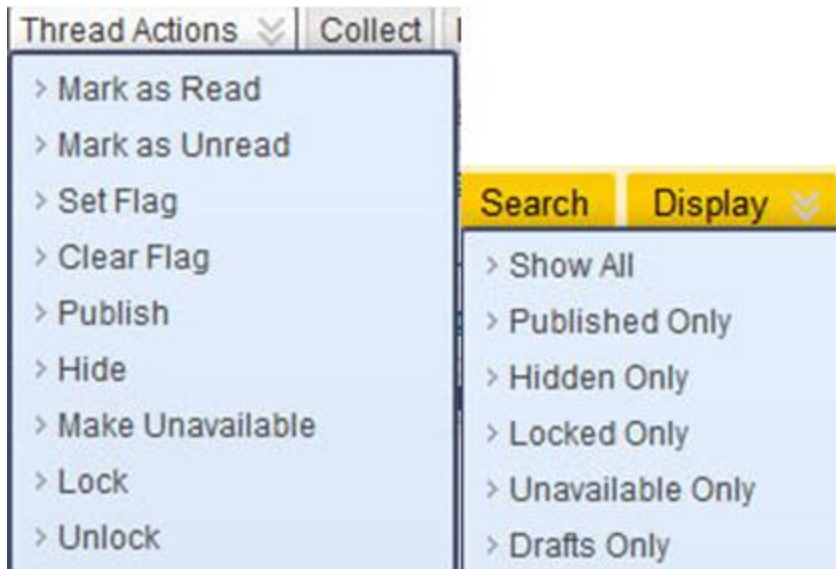
List View is the default view and has the following functions.

- Click thread link to open the parent messages and display links to any reply messages.
- Sort by the following columns: date, thread subject line (alphabetical), thread status (published, draft, hidden, etc), number of unread messages (specific to the individual reader), and number of messages (in the thread). To sort a column, click the column header and then the caret.
- Collect messages or threads for sorting and viewing in one page and for printing.

The screenshot shows a forum interface for "Forum: test board". At the top right, there are buttons for "List View" and "Tree View". Below the forum title, there is a text box explaining that threads are listed in a tabular format and can be sorted by clicking column titles or carets. A "Create Thread" button is on the left, and "Search" and "Display" buttons are on the right. A table of threads is shown with columns: Date, Thread, Author, Status, Unread Posts, and Total Posts. Two threads are listed: "thread 2" and "thread 1", both by Jane Harris, published on 10/4/11. Red arrows point to various UI elements with annotations: "Select threads and click Collect to view in one page and print if desired." points to the checkboxes and "Collect" button; "Select column and click caret to sort." points to the caret in the "Unread Posts" column header; "Click link to open message." points to the "thread 1" link.

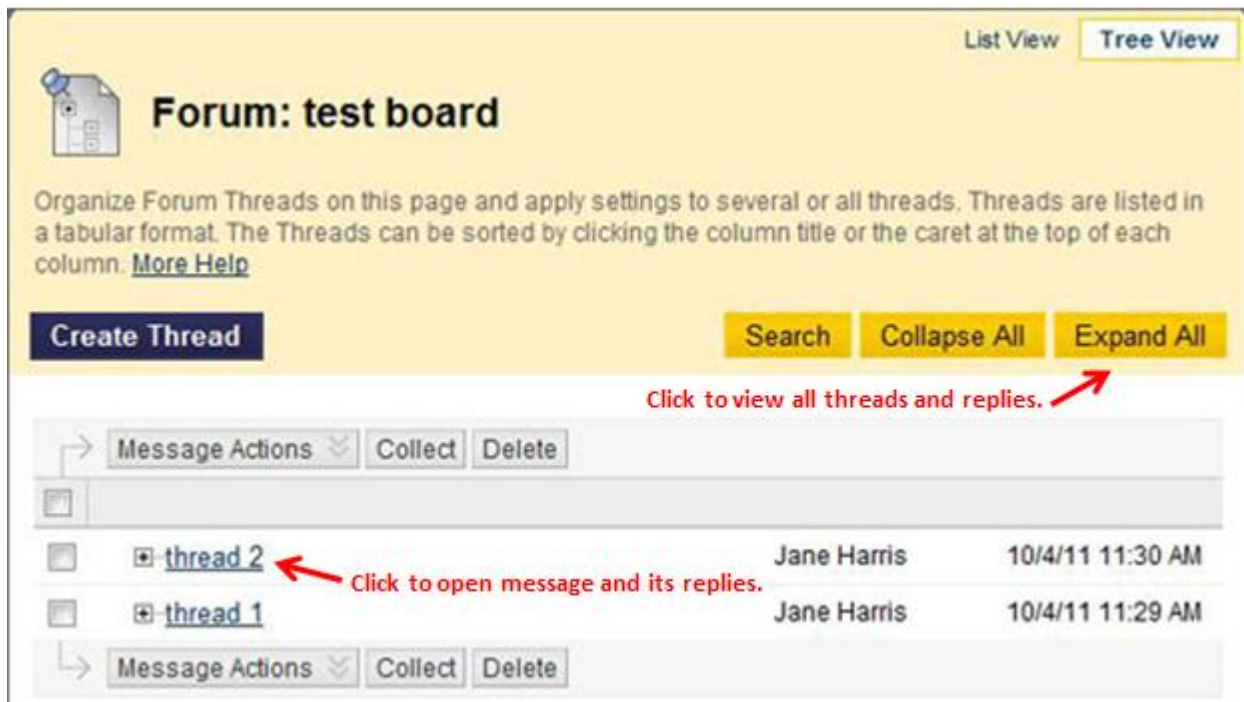
| Date | Thread | Author | Status | Unread Posts | Total Posts |
|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| 10/4/11 11:30 AM | thread 2 | Jane Harris | Published | 0 | 2 |
| 10/4/11 11:29 AM | thread 1 | Jane Harris | Published | 0 | 2 |

- Message Actions
 - First, click the message(s) and then select one of the following actions.
 - Mark messages or entire threads Read or Unread. (Setting only displays to the user who set it.)
 - Set or Clear Flag for messages or entire threads. (Setting only displays to the user who set it.)
 - Publish (for draft messages).
 - Hide (users must select Show All or Hidden Only under Display to view hidden messages - good for de-cluttering Forum thread view).
 - Make unavailable (Only users with Forum Manager rights can view these messages).
 - Lock (Messages can be read, but cannot be edited or replied to) or Unlock.
- Display (see drop down on the right) - displays messages by categories (Show All, Published, Hidden, Locked, Unavailable (only for Forum Managers), and Drafts (users just see their own)).



Tree View has fewer functions but has a cleaner interface and therefore may be easier to use.

- Click thread link to open the parent message and display links to any reply messages. Alternatively, Click Expand All to view links to all messages.
- Message Actions
 - Mark messages or entire threads Read or Unread. (Setting only displays to the user who set it.)
 - Set or Clear Flag for messages or entire threads. (Setting only displays to the user who set it.)
- Collect messages or threads for sorting and viewing in one page or for printing.



Search

The Search function is available in both the List and Tree Views. Search by keyword, by current or all forums and optionally, by date and time range.

The screenshot shows a search interface with the following elements and annotations:

- 1. Enter keyword(s).**: A red arrow points to the "Search" text input field.
- 2. Select Forum(s) or Board.**: A red arrow points to the "Current Forum" dropdown menu.
- 3. Select Date/Time Range or uncheck boxes for unrestricted.**: A red arrow points to the "After" date and time selection fields.
- 4. Click Go.**: A red arrow points to the "Go" button.

The interface includes a "Create Thread" button, a "Search" button, and a "Display" dropdown menu. The date and time fields are set to "10/04/2011" and "12:00 AM" respectively, with a "Before" field set to "10/04/2011" and "04:10 PM". A "Go" button is located below the date and time fields.

Create Thread

1. Click Create Thread button (upper left).
2. Type text into the Subject box.
3. Type message in the Message box. For more advanced functions (such as embedding an image or adding an active web link), mouse over the icons in the editor.
4. Click Browse My Computer (or Browse Content Collection) to attach a file, if desired.
5. Click Submit to post or Save Draft if desired.

Create Reply

1. To reply to a specific message, it is necessary to click the link to that message first.
2. Once you see the contents of the message, click one of the Reply buttons on the right (either immediately above or below the message body.)
3. If you wish to include part or all of the message to which you are replying, click Quote rather than Reply. Note that it is possible to edit or delete parts of the message to which you are replying.
4. After you type your reply, click Submit, or, if desired, Save Draft.