

Discussion Boards

Discussion boards allow groups or individuals to communicate and discuss topics of interest asynchronously. Discussions may take place for a few days, weeks, or the entire semester. A discussion board contains a series of **forums** or folders covering a central topic to which readers respond. Responses to topics related to the forum are **threads**. Threads contain individual responses called **posts**.

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. (BBBethW, 2013)

Features and Benefits

Feature	Benefit
Quote	Users can quote another user's post when answering a thread. This is very useful if the post relates to an older thread.
View by Tree	Forums can be viewed by "tree" that is, see all of the replies (posts) to a specific thread.
Grading	Forums and threads can be graded
Search	Searches can be conducted by keyword, date, and location. Location options include current thread, current forum, discussion board, and all forums.
Collect Posts	Allows members to group selected forums threads together and sort them by author or status. This is an excellent tool for grading and moderating posts.
Create Gradebook items for Discussion Board contributions.	When a discussion board is created, a Gradebook item can be created at the same time.
Thread Rating System	Members can use 1 to 5 star rating system to rate each other's posts. This peer review tool encourages members to strive to post scholarly content.
Subscribe to posts	Members (and managers) can receive an email alert when a post is updated or a member posts a reply.
Flag	User can place flag on a thread to call attention to the post.
Roles	There are six role types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blocked- No privileges in the forum. This role can be used as a deterrent to postings that are offensive or inappropriate. • Reader- Can read but not post in forums. • Participant – Can read, post, and edit threads (if the edit function is available).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grader - Has the same privileges as the participant, but can also grade posts. • Moderator- Has all of the participant privileges plus the ability to delete or modify posts. If the <i>Force Moderation</i> setting is applied when the forum is created, the moderator must review ALL of the posts prior to posting. These posts are called <i>Published Posts</i>. • Manager – Has full control over the forum. Managers can delete forums, moderate and grade threads. The instructor should be the sole manager, but that role may be assigned to a student or TA. <p>Roles in the new discussion board have been revised and expanded. Role assignment is easier as well. Roles are assigned to members by the forum manager, who can modify a member’s role at any time. Each member has only one role. The default role is participant.</p>
Multiple thread status choices	<p>Instead of posting a thread and have readers see it as soon as it is posted, Managers have several options for the status of threads to ensure quality content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published: A thread that is available to members. • Locked: The thread may be read but not edited. Locking threads keeps members accountable for their content. • Unlocked: The tread can be edited. • Hidden: Thread is not displayed until member chooses. A hidden thread may not be edited. Hiding a thread allows members to remove outdated content. • Unavailable: Thread is only visible to the forum manager. Only the manager can make the thread risible.
WYSIWYG editor	This feature allows members to type and edit text, as it will appear when published in the discussion board.
Insert Photos, Documents, Audio or Video clips	Photos, documents (presentations, spreadsheets or text), images and audio files add depth and clarity to the Discussion Board by adding interactive content.

Best Practices for Discussion Boards

Success with a discussion board requires planning and preparation. The discussion board is not just a handy online tool that substitutes for a classroom, but as your classroom *online*. What you expect from your members in the classroom carries over to the discussion board. In the syllabus, explain your expectations for participation in the discussion process.

Determine the style of discussion:

- **Student-to-class** Students respond directly to thread.
- **Student-to-student discussion** Students reply directly to one another’s posts, rather than responding to the thread. Students should quote the initial post as part of their response.
- **Group discussion** Students are directed by their instructor to have an exclusive conversation within a group setting

Have the members take a test drive: Create a forum that lets them introduce themselves and answer open-ended questions about themselves. Ask them to post an image, audio or video, and use the WYSIWYG editor with their response.

Moderate the discussion: Be sure to check in on the discussion frequently to evaluate responses, elicit greater feedback between users, and generate input from users who have not yet responded to the discussion.

Accommodate different learning styles: Use images, embedded video demonstrations or recorded audio into forum threads, or require these tools in student's posts.

Structure forum topics to elicit open-ended responses: Instead of asking for a list of issues associated with an historic event, ask members to explain how these events affected history by addressing issues relevant to the event.

Create a rubric: that sets a grading standard for all groups or individuals and share it with the members.

Peer Review: Require group members to peer-review posts and provide feedback on member's contributions.

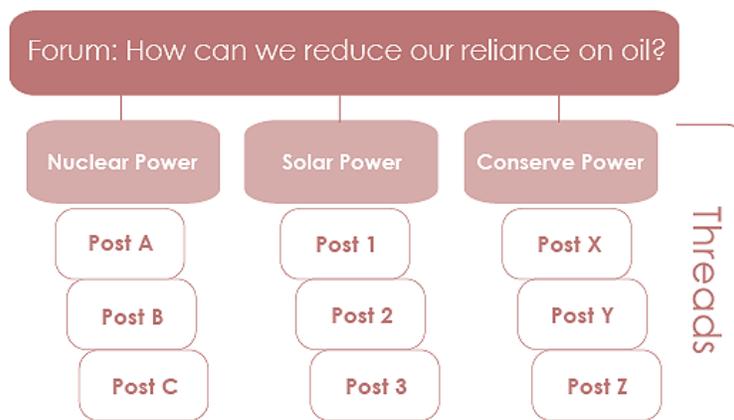
Express dismay: When the quality of a member's posting is not up to the standard that you have set, let the member know it. This can be as simple as a friendly note urging members to explain a point more thoroughly, or as drastic as blocking a member for posting inappropriate content.

Convey expectations for Discussion Board content:

- **Minimum participation:** Set a minimum requirement for the number of threads generated and responses to classmate's threads
- **Quantity of information:** Expect students to write responses that will generate further discussion.
- **Quality of grammar, spelling, and prose:** The expectation for documents turned in the classroom should be the same standard for posting in a forum.
- **Timely response:** Forums or threads should require a minimum and maximum response time.
- **Corrections:** If the forum allows members to revise posts, set a standard for how quickly a member reacts to errors such as broken links, spelling errors or other mistakes discovered by instructors and group members

Understanding Discussion Forums and Threads

Just as it is critical to plan and structure your course content, you need to provide structure for online discussions. Forums allow you to group related discussions and help your students stay on task. Before anyone can start message threads, you need to create one or more forums.



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. (BBBethW, 2013)

Blackboard Video Tutorials: Discussion Boards

- [A Tour of the Discussion Board](#)
- [Create a Discussion Forum](#)
- [Manage a Discussion](#)
- [Search and Collect Discussion Posts](#)
- [Grade a Discussion Forum](#)

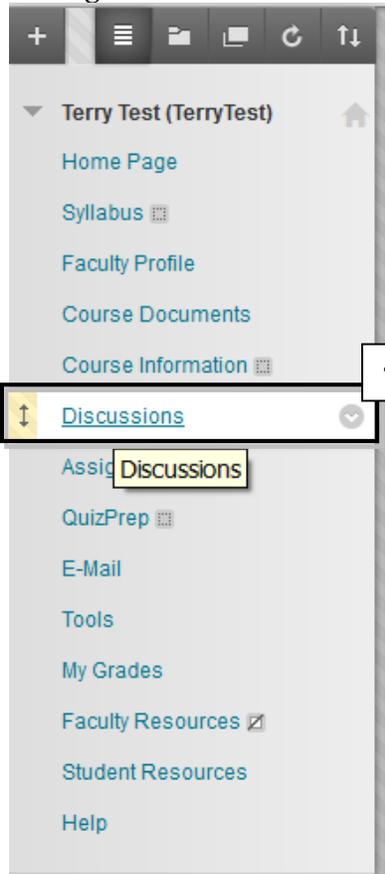
Additional Online Discussion Board Resources

- http://technologysource.org/article/web_discussion_forums_in_teaching_and_learning/
- http://www.hawkeye.cc.ia.us/faculty/cpost/using_discussion_boards_paper.htm
- <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer42/markel42.html>

Forums

Create Forum from the Discussions Link

If you want the discussion board to appear in a content area, please review the instructions for creating a forum in a content area.



1. With the **Edit Mode ON**,  click the **discussion board** Link on the Course Menu.
2. The **discussion board page** opens, click **Create Forum**.  In order to activate the discussion board, the initial forum is created by the instructor.



3. The **Create Forum** page opens. Enter the name of the forum in the **Name field**.

4. Write the topic and a description of the forum in the **Description field**.
5. Click **Yes** to make the forum available. (You can create forums ahead of time and set the availability to **No** until the discussion is ready to start.)
6. Click the **Display After/Until** checkboxes, and then choose dates and times by clicking the **calendar** and **clock** icons.

7

3. Forum Settings

If a Due Date is set, submissions are accepted after this date, but are marked late.

Viewing Threads/Replies

Standard View

Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum.
If participants are required to create threads in order to view other threads in the forum, they cannot delete or edit their own posts, and cannot post for you automatically.

It looks like the forum description field is empty. You should use that field to provide posting instructions for students.

Grade

No Grading in Forum

Grade Discussion Forum: Points possible:

Grade-Threads

Subscribe

Do not allow subscriptions

Allow members to subscribe to threads

Allow members to subscribe to forum

Include body of post in the email

Include link to post

Create and Edit

Allow Anonymous Posts

Allow Author to Delete Own Posts

All posts

Only posts with no replies

Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts

Allow Members to Create New Threads

Allow File Attachments

Allow Users to Reply with Quote

Force Moderation of Posts

Additional Options

Allow Post Tagging

Allow Members to Rate Posts

7. Scroll down to the **Forum Settings** There are several setting to consider: Note that choosing certain forum options may disable other forum options

- **Viewing: Threads/Replies**

- **Standard View:** This is the default option, allowing the instructor to create threads, or choose to allow students to create threads and edit posts.
- **Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum:** This option eliminates the Standard View options. If this option is chosen, the instructor *must provide posting instructions for students* in the forum description field.

- **Grading:**

- **No Grading in Forum**
- **Grade Discussion Forum:** If chosen, the instructors must add a point value.
- **Grade Thread:** This will open a grading option when the thread is created.

- **Subscribe:** Check this box to allow members to receive an email each time a forum member posts to or replies to a subscribed forum or thread.

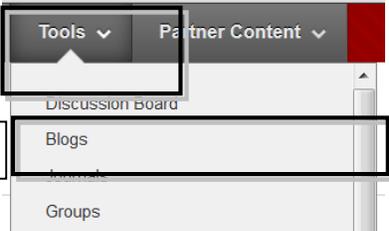
- Members can subscribe to the forum, thread or posts within the forum.

- **Create and Edit:**

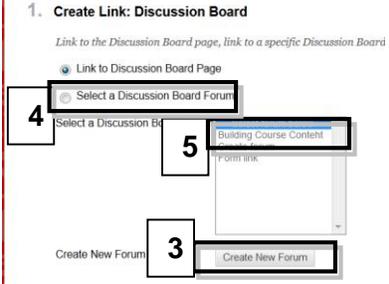
- **Allow Anonymous Posts** - Leave un-checked to encourage appropriate behavior in the forum
- **Allow Author to Delete Own Posts** - Leave un-checked to encourage appropriate spelling, grammar and language.
- **Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts** Leave un-checked to encourage appropriate spelling, grammar and language.
- **Allow Members To Create New Threads** - Leave un-checked. The instructor should always create the first thread. Instructors should generated threads to keep the forum focused.

- **Allow File Attachments** - Check this box to add documents, images, or other types of file attachments to a post.
- **Allow Users To Reply With Quote** – Check this box to allow members to quote the post of another member in their reply.
- **Force Moderation of Posts** - Leave un-checked, as it will require instructor or designated manager to review and approve EVERY post.
- **Additional Options**
 - **Allow Post Tagging** - Leave un-checked. Tagging will result in slower page loading.
 - **Allow Members To Rate Posts** - Check this box to activate 1 to 5 star rating system, which may be used to elicit peer feedback.
- Click **Submit**. 

Create a Forum in a Content Area



1. In any content area, click **Tools**
2. Click **discussion board**



3. The **Create Link: discussion board page** opens, click **Create New Forum** to create a new forum.
4. If a forum has already been created, click **Select a discussion board Forum**
5. **Choose a forum** from the list
6. Click **Next** 



7. The **Create Forum** page opens. Enter the name of the forum in the **Name field**.
8. Write the topic and a description of the forum in the **Description field**.



9. **Available** Yes No
10. **Display After**
11. **Display Until**

7. The **Create Forum** page opens. Enter the name of the forum in the **Name field**.
8. Write the topic and a description of the forum in the **Description field**.

9. Click **Yes** to make the forum available. (You can create forums ahead of time and set the availability to **No** until the discussion is ready to start.)
10. Click the **Display After/Until** checkboxes, and then choose dates and times by clicking the **calendar** and **clock** icons.

11

3. Forum Settings

If a Due Date is set, submissions are accepted after this date, but are marked late.

Viewing Threads/Replies

Standard View

Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum.
If participants are required to create threads in order to view other threads in the forum, they cannot delete or edit their own posts, and cannot post for you automatically.

It looks like the forum description field is empty. You should use that field to provide posting instructions for students.

Grade

No Grading in Forum

Grade Discussion Forum: Points possible:

Grade-Threads

Subscribe

Do not allow subscriptions

Allow members to subscribe to threads

Allow members to subscribe to forum

Include body of post in the email

Include link to post

Create and Edit

Allow Anonymous Posts

Allow Author to Delete Own Posts

All posts

Only posts with no replies

Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts

Allow Members to Create New Threads

Allow File Attachments

Allow Users to Reply with Quote

Force Moderation of Posts

Additional Options

Allow Post Tagging

Allow Members to Rate Posts

11. Scroll down to the **Forum Settings** There are several setting to consider: Note that choosing certain forum options may disable other forum options

- **Viewing: Threads/Replies**
 - **Standard View:** This is the default option, allowing the instructor to solely create threads, or choose to allow students to create threads and edit posts.
 - **Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum:** This option eliminates the Standard View options. If this option is chosen, the instructor *must provide posting instructions for students* in the forum description field.
- **Grading:**
 - **No Grading in Forum**
 - **Grade Discussion Forum:** If chosen, the instructors must add a point value.
 - **Grade Thread:** This will open a grading option when the thread is created.
- **Subscribe:** Check this box to allow members to receive an email each time a forum member posts to or replies to a subscribed forum or thread.
 - Members can subscribe to the forum, thread or posts within the forum.
- **Create and Edit:**
 - **Allow Anonymous Posts** - Leave un-checked to encourage appropriate behavior in the forum
 - **Allow Author to Delete Own Posts** - Leave un-checked to encourage appropriate spelling, grammar and language.
 - **Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts** Leave un-checked to encourage appropriate spelling, grammar and language.
 - **Allow Members To Create New Threads** - Leave un-checked. The instructor should always create the first thread. Instructors should generated threads to keep the forum focused.

- **Allow File Attachments** - Check this box to add documents, images, or other types of file attachments to a post.
- **Allow Users To Reply With Quote** – Check this box to allow members to quote the post of another member in their reply.
- **Force Moderation of Posts** - Leave un-checked, as it will require instructor or designated manager to review and approve EVERY post.
- **Additional Options**
 - **Allow Post Tagging** - Leave un-checked. Tagging will result in slower page loading.
 - **Allow Members To Rate Posts** - Check this box to activate 1 to 5 star rating system, which may be used to elicit peer feedback.
- Click **Submit**. 

Link Information

Next, we will create a link to the discussion board. The discussion board resides in the discussion tool, so you will link the board to the content area.

2

1

1. Link Information

Link Name

Color of name Black

Link

Text

Rich text editor toolbar with options: Paragraph, Arial, 3 (12pt), Bold, Italic, Underline, Text Color, Background Color, Bulleted List, Numbered List, Indent, Outdent, Undo, Redo, Link, Unlink, Image, Table, Table of Contents, Source Code (HTML, CSS).

Path:

2. Options

Available Yes No

Track Number of Views Yes No

Date Restrictions

Display After

Enter dates as mm/dd/yyyy. Time may be entered in any increment.

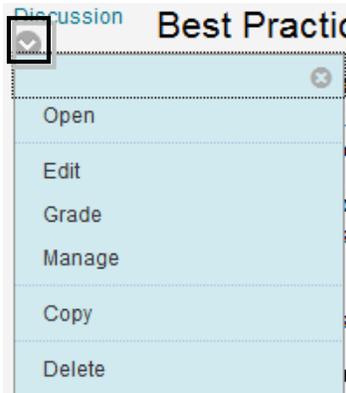
Display Until

Enter dates as mm/dd/yyyy. Time may be entered in any increment.

12. The **Link Information** page opens. Add a **link name** (by default, it will be the name of the forum)
13. Use the **Text field** to add the topic, description and forum instructions. *If you do not type anything here, the forum will appear blank to students in the content area.*
14. If you created date and time restrictions for the forum, **DO NOT** repeat them here. Leave this area blank
15. Click **Submit**  and the forum will appear in the content area.

Forum Options

Forum options are accessed from the discussion Tool. If a forum is created in a content area, you must click the discussion tool in the course menu to access the forum options.

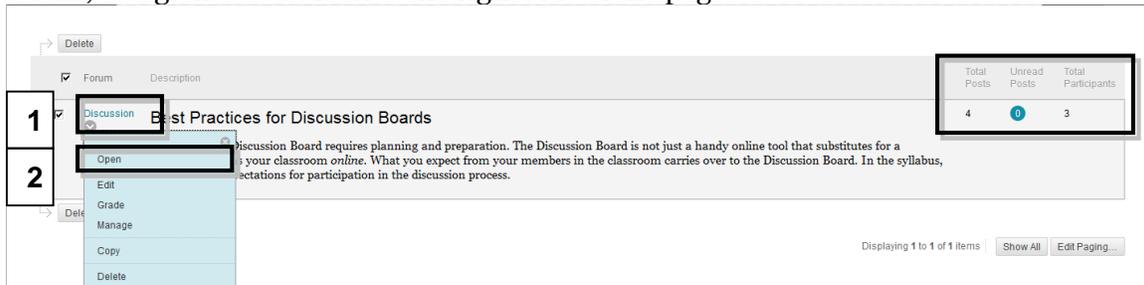


Click the **Action Button**  under the [forum link](#) to view the forum options:

- **Open** – Opens the Forum.
- **Edit** – Opens the **Edit Forum page** to allow changes to the forum.
- **Grade** – Opens the **Grade Forum page**. This option is **only** available if the grading option is chosen when the forum is created or edited.
- **Manage** – Review and change member roles.
- **Copy** – Make a copy of forum.
- **Delete** – Permanently deletes forum. Note that if you delete the forum from a content area, you are only deleting the forum link, and you must still delete the forum from the discussion board area.

Open Forum

Once students have posted to your forum, you will want to review the posts. Note that Blackboard allows you to see the **Total Posts, Unread Posts, & Total Participants** within the forum, at a glance. Just look at the right side of the page.



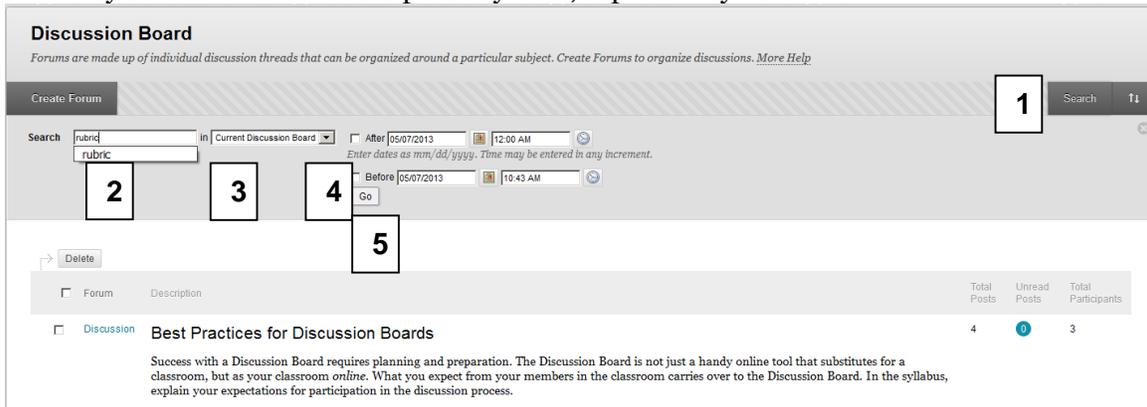
1. Click the **Forum Name**. This is a link to open the forum. You may also click the **Action Button**  under the [forum link](#).
2. Click **Open**. 

Edit Forum

1. Click the **Action Button**  under the [forum link](#) to make changes to a forum or setting.
2. Click **Edit**. 
3. The **Edit Forum page** opens. Make necessary changes to the **Name Field, Description Field, Forum Availability, Date and Time, Grading** or other **Forum Settings**.
4. Click **Submit**. 

Search Forums

Forums may be searched to locate posts by user, topic or keyword.

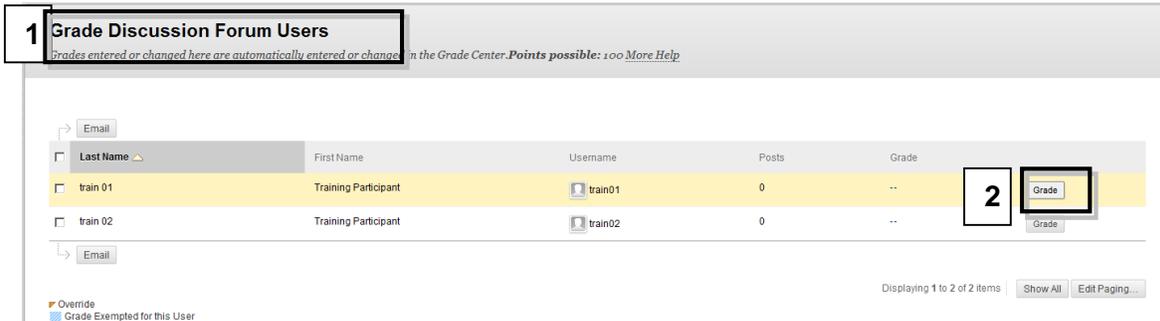


1. Open the discussion board. On the forum page click Search 
2. In the **Search** window enter a **search term**
3. In the **In** window, choose a **forum from the drop-down list**
4. Choose date and time search criteria by clicking the **Display After/Until** checkboxes , and then choose dates and times by clicking the **calendar**  and **clock**  icons.
5. Click **Go** 

Grade Forum

The Grade Forum option must be checked when creating the forum in order to use the Grade Option.

1. Click the **Action Button**  under the **forum link**
2. Click **Grade.** 



3. The Grade Center Inline Grading tool opens. Review the text and **type in a grade**
4. You can also add a **reply** to the user's post by clicking reply
5. You may also add **user feedback and private comments.**
6. Click **Submit** to post the grade and begin grading the next student's discussion

Note that all of the student's threads and posts, will appear in Inline Grading tool.

Sort by Date of Last Post Order ▲ Ascending

Select: All None

Mark

Thread: Collaboration Posted Date: April 25, 2014 12:02 PM
 Post: Collaboration Status: Published
 Author: Training Participant train 02

4 Reply Quote Mark as Read

Forum Statistics

Training Participant train 02 (1)

Grade 4/25/14 12:02 PM 3 /100

5 FEEDBACK - SHOWN TO LEARNER

6 Submit

Exit

Manage Forum

1. Click the **Action Button** under the **forum link**
2. Click **Manage**.
3. The **Manage Forum Users** page opens.

3 **Manage Forum Users**
 Edit a course member's forum role by selecting a new role in the forum role select menu.

5 Display Forum Role All Forum Users Go

4 Edit Role

Username	Last Name	Username	Forum Role
Peak	Peak	tpeak	Manager
train 01	train 01	train01	Participant
train 02	train 02	train02	Participant

5 Participant

7 OK

Displaying 1 to 3 of 3 items Show All Edit Paging...

4. Check the box(es) next to the **username**. One or more users may have their roles changed at any time, over the life of a forum.
5. Click the **Edit Role** button.
6. Click the **role name** to choose a role. The default role for the instructor is **Manager**. The default role for a student is **Participant**. Roles include:

- **Manager** – Has full control over the forum. Managers can delete forums, moderate and grade threads. The instructor should be the sole manager, but this role may be assigned to a student or Teaching Assistant.
- **Builder** – Participant privileges plus the ability to copy, edit and delete forums.
- **Moderator**- Participant privileges plus the ability to delete or modify posts. If the *Force Moderation* setting is applied when the forum is created, the moderator **must approve ALL** posts prior to publishing.
- **Grader** – Participant privileges, they also grade posts.

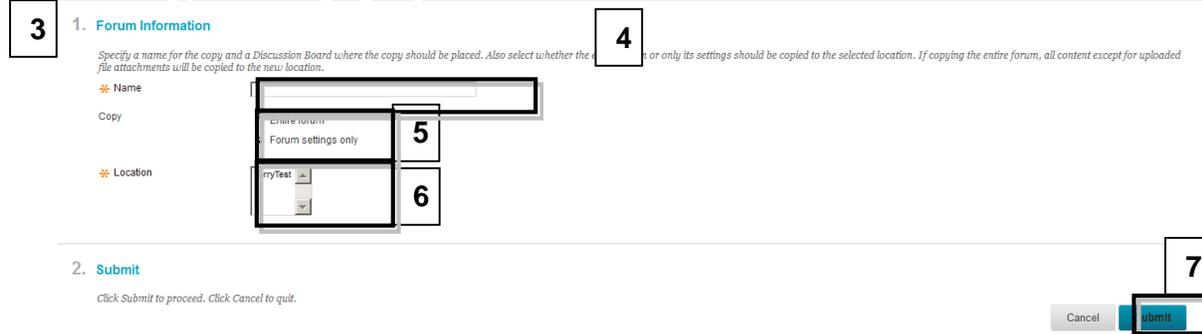
- **Participant** – Can read, post, and edit threads (if the edit function is available).
- **Reader**- Can read threads and posts, but cannot participate in the discussion.
- **Blocked** - Cannot access the forum.

7. After choosing a role, cclick **OK**. 

Copy Forum

Copying a forum allows you to make a copy of a forum to distribute to other **Groups** within the course, or to another course that you are teaching. If copying the entire forum, all content *except file attachments* will be copied.

1. Click the **Action Button**  under the **forum link**
2. Click **Copy**. 
3. The **Copy Forum** page opens.



The screenshot shows the 'Copy Forum' interface. Callout 3 points to the '1. Forum Information' section header. Callout 4 points to the instruction text: 'Specify a name for the copy and a Discussion Board where the copy should be placed. Also select whether the entire forum or only its settings should be copied to the selected location. If copying the entire forum, all content except for uploaded file attachments will be copied to the new location.' Callout 5 points to the 'Copy' section with radio buttons for 'Entire forum' and 'Forum settings only'. Callout 6 points to the 'Location' dropdown menu showing 'mytest'. Callout 7 points to the '2. Submit' section with 'Cancel' and 'Submit' buttons.

4. Type a **Name** for the forum.
5. Choose what to copy, either the **entire forum** or the **forum settings**.
6. Choose a copy **location** (group or course).
7. Click **Submit**. 

Delete Forum

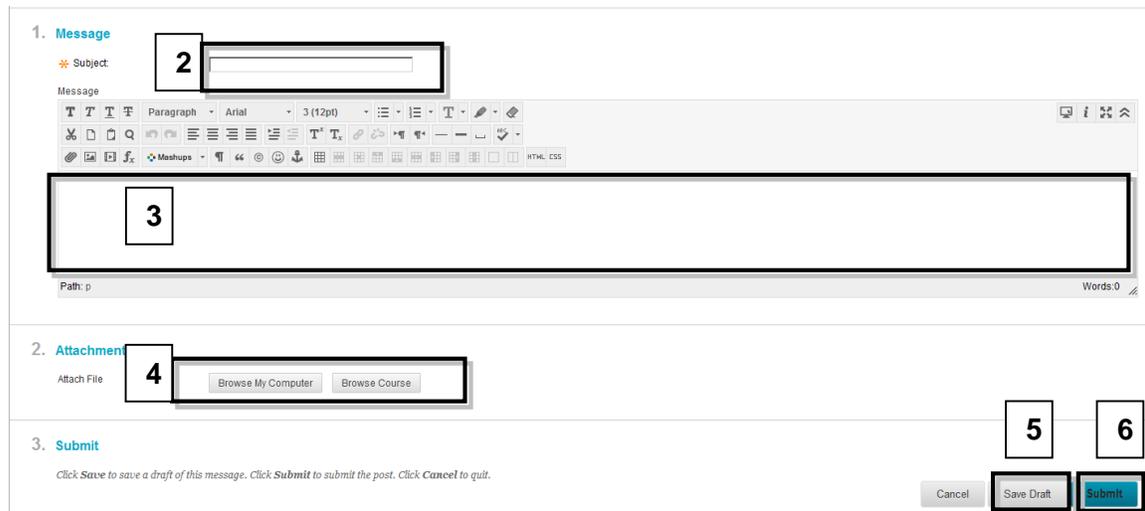
1. Click the **Action Button**  under the **forum link**
2. Click **Delete**. 
3. **READ THE WARNING.** Once content is removed, the action is permanent.
4. Click **OK** on the Warning Menu.

Threads and Posts

Threads are the initial post and the entire series of replies, or posts to that thread within a discussion board forum. In order for members to participate in a forum, an initial thread must be established by the instructor or their designated manager. Members may also create their own threads if the instructor allows this option.

Create Thread

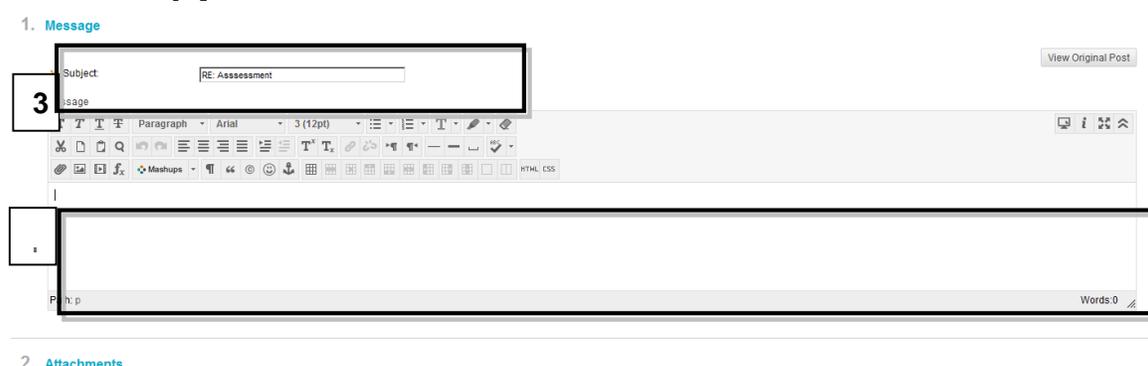
1. Click **Create Thread**  to open the **Add Thread** page.



2. Enter the **Subject** of the new thread in the **Subject** field.
3. Enter the text that you would like to be displayed in the **Message** field.
4. Click a **Browse option** to add an attachment such as a document, image or multimedia file.
5. Click **Save Draft** to save, but not publish the thread.
6. Click **Submit** to publish the thread.

Create Post

1. Click the thread link to open the thread
2. Click the **Reply** button.

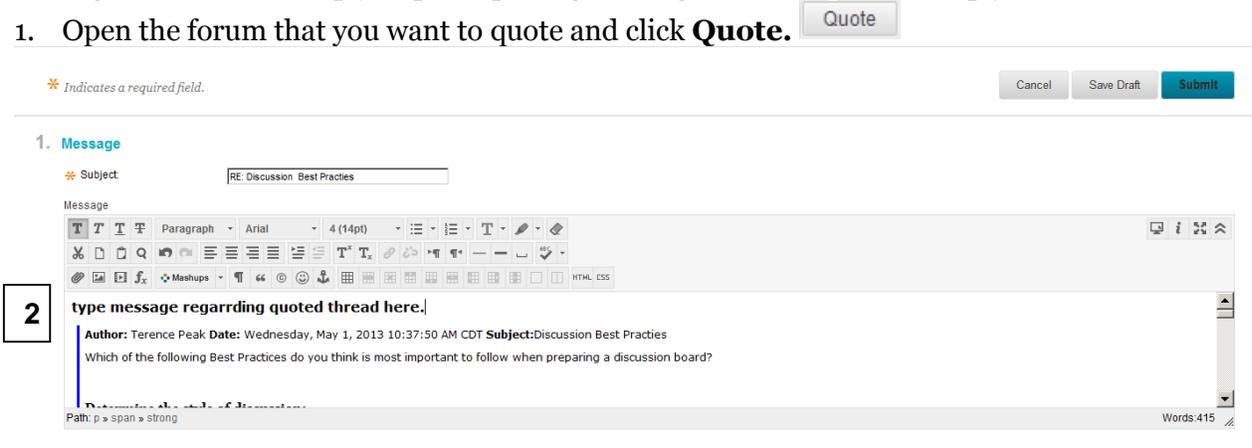


3. Enter the **Subject** of the new thread in the **Subject** field. By default, the subject will be RE: and the title of the thread. **Be sure to change the subject line.**
4. Enter the text that you would like to be displayed in the **Message** field.
5. Click a **Browse option** to add an attachment such as a document, image or multimedia file.
6. Click **Save Draft** to save, but not publish the thread.
7. Click **Submit** to publish the thread.

Quote

Quoting allows users to reply to post, quoting the original message in the reply

1. Open the forum that you want to quote and click **Quote**.



The screenshot shows a web form for replying to a forum post. At the top right, there are buttons for "Cancel", "Save Draft", and "Submit". A note at the top left states "* Indicates a required field." The form has a "Subject" field containing "RE: Discussion Best Practices". Below this is a "Message" field with a rich text editor toolbar. A blue box with the number "2" highlights the text "type message regarding quoted thread here." in the message field. Below the message field, a quoted message is visible, starting with "Author: Terence Peak Date: Wednesday, May 1, 2013 10:37:50 AM CDT Subject: Discussion Best Practices" and the text "Which of the following Best Practices do you think is most important to follow when preparing a discussion board?". At the bottom of the form, there are "Save Draft" and "Submit" buttons. The status bar at the bottom indicates "Path: p > span > strong" and "Words: 415".

2. Enter the text that you would like to be displayed in the **Message** field.
3. Click a **Browse option** to add an attachment such as a document, image or multimedia file.
4. Click **Save Draft** to save, but not publish the thread.
5. Click **Submit** to publish the thread.

Delete Thread

1. Open the forum that you want to quote and click **Delete**.
2. READ THE WARNING. Once content is removed, the action is permanent.
3. Click OK on the Warning Menu.