

# Academic Technologies: Using the Discussion Board

## How Students Can Use the Discussion Board

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### Use the Discussion Board

The Discussion Board is a tool for sharing thoughts and ideas about class materials. The Discussion Board is made up of forums that may appear anywhere in the course but are also all located in the Discussion Board tool. A forum is a major subject or category for a discussion. A thread is the initial post and all the replies to that post within a Discussion Board forum.

### Forum View

The forum view lists the threads in the forum. The forum can be viewed in: Tree View or List View This choice can be changed at any time

#### Tree View

The Tree View presents the thread starter messages and their child messages. The child messages can be expanded and collapsed by using the plus/minus icon next to each message. Unread threads and posts are displayed in bold type. A search function and an action bar that includes many functions are available at the top of the page.

#### List View

The List View presents the list of threads in a tabular format. The threads can be sorted by clicking the carat at the top of each column. Posts within the thread are viewed by clicking on the hyperlinked name of the thread in the Thread column.

#### Action Bar

At the top of the page is an action bar that includes the following functions: Add Thread, Remove, Collect, Flag, Clear Flag, Mark Read, Mark Unread, Subscribe/Unsubscribe, Grade Forum, and Change Status.

#### Thread View

Clicking on a thread in a forum brings up the Thread Detail. The thread view is divided into three parts. Post viewing and management functions appear at the top of the page. The middle of the page displays a list of posts, with replies nested underneath the thread starter message. The bottom of the page displays the current post. Unread posts are displayed in bold type.

### To Initiate a Thread

Threads are a series of posts related to a similar topic. When creating a forum, the Forum Manager has the option of allowing or not allowing users to start threads. Log in and choose a course.

1. Click on the Communication button and choose the Discussions Board link.
2. Open a **Discussion Board Forum**.
3. Click **Add Thread** in the action bar.
4. Enter a **Subject** and a **Message**. It is also possible to attach files to the post.
5. Click **Save** to store a draft of the post or click **Submit** to create the thread.

### To Respond To a Post

Threads grow as users respond to the initial, and subsequent, posts. Replies build on one another to construct a conversation. Log in and choose a course.

1. Click on the Communication button and choose the Discussions Board link.
2. Open a **Discussion Board Forum**.
3. Open a thread in a forum.
4. Find a post.
5. Click **Reply** for that post.
6. Enter a **Subject** and a **Message**. It is also possible to attach files to the post.
7. Click **Save** to store a draft of the post or click **Submit** to create the thread.
8. The post will appear in the thread underneath the original post.

### To See Viewing Options

Blackboard allows you to view multiple messages on one screen.

1. Click on the gray **Show Options** tab on the right side of the screen (above the time/date).
2. Click the **Select All** button
3. Click the **Collect** button
4. Scroll down the page to read all the messages.

### To Add a File to a Discussion Thread

1. In the **Reply** area, there is an option to browse for an attachment.
2. Click on the **Browse** button and select your file.
3. To avoid compatibility issues between computers, **before** you upload the files, please ensure:
  - All file names end with a period followed by the three-letter file extension.
  - All file names consist only of letters, digits, underscores (" \_"),but contain no spaces.
  - The **only** period is the one before the file extension.
  - The filename is at most 31 characters, including the period and extension.