

## Setting Up and Using Discussion Boards

Blackboard's Discussion Board is one of the most widely-used features because of its potential for connecting faculty and students asynchronously.

### Accessing Discussion Boards

You can access Discussion Boards in two ways:

- **From the main course menu**, click **Discussions**. You will be brought to the entire class Discussion Board.
- **Through the Control Panel**, click **Discussion Board** in the **Course Tools** menu. You will see a list of *all* Discussion Boards in your course site -- both the “**entire class**” Discussion Board, identified by the course ID (in the example below, W7890\_A\_072), and **group** Discussion Boards).

### Setting Up Discussion Board Forums

1. Click the **Discussions** link in the course menu, and then click **Create Forum**. (You can also create a forum within a content area by selecting **Discussion Board** under the **Add Interactive Tool** drop-down menu, and then clicking **Create New Forum**.)
2. Give the forum a name. Use the **Description** box to describe the discussion task to your students.
3. You can make the forum available immediately or create it and make it available within a specified window of time. Choose **Yes** or **No** for **Available**, then select date and time restrictions if desired. (You must have **Yes** checked for **Available** if setting date and time restrictions.)
4. Choose the settings in the **Forum Settings** menu. Suggestions for some of the major options are below:
  - **Allow Anonymous Posts**. Useful for sensitive topics or formative evaluation but many faculty prefer that students “own” their posts.
  - **Allow Author to Delete Own Posts**. *Recommended setting*: Only postings with no replies. (If you grade student participation, if a student removes replies to his/her own posting, the record of other students' participation is also removed.)
  - **Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts**. May allow students to change a posting after you grade it.
  - **Allow Post Tagging** Allow students to add keywords to make topics more easily searchable.
  - **Allow Users to Reply with Quote**. Allows users to include (and edit) the text of the original message in any replies to that message. This is enabled by default.
  - **Allow File Attachments**. Useful, but remind students to scan documents for viruses before posting.
  - **Allow Members to Create New Threads**. If not selected, students can only post by replying to other postings.
  - **Allow Members to Rate Posts**. Allows students to review their peers' work and rate it.
  - **Force Moderation of Posts**. Moderated postings must first be reviewed by the faculty or an appointed moderator, who then decides whether or not to “publish” them. Useful if you first want to review students' work before making it available to the entire class.
  - **Grade**. Grading of forums or threads is linked to the Grade Center.

5. Click **Submit**. The forum appears as a link. You can re-order the forums using the up-and-down arrows to the left of each forum name.

### Posting messages to a forum (as Threads)

1. Click the name of the forum.
2. Click **Create Thread**.
3. Enter a **Subject** and your **message**.
4. Click **Submit**. (You can also use **Save a draft** if you want to come back and finish it later before posting it.)

### Reading messages in a forum

First be sure to click **Show All** or **Edit Paging** to show all available forums.

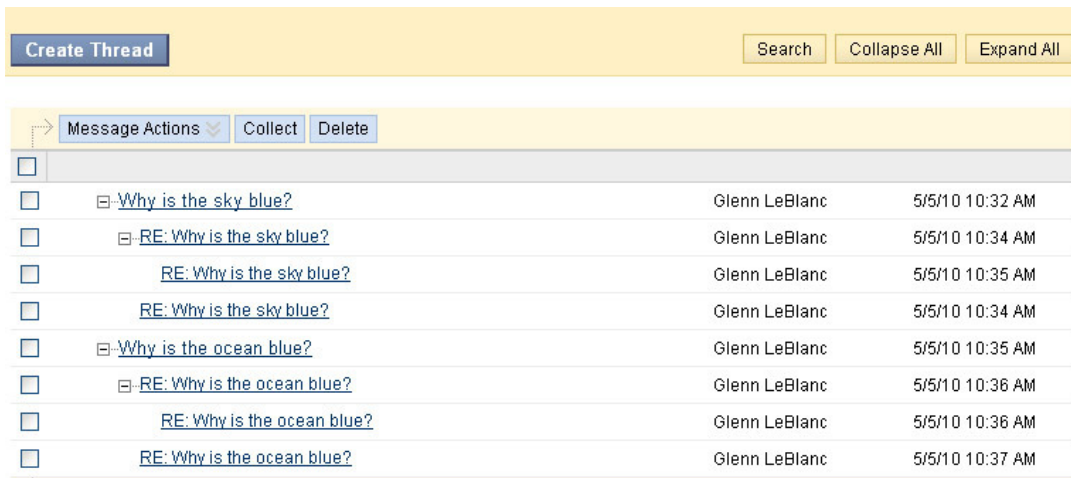
Displaying 1 to 1 of 3 items

Click on the forum name to open the forum. There are two possible views of the forum: **Tree View** and **List View** (selected using buttons in the upper right of your screen).

**List View** displays only the Threads (usually, the main topics of the discussion). To view replies to a thread, click the name of the thread.

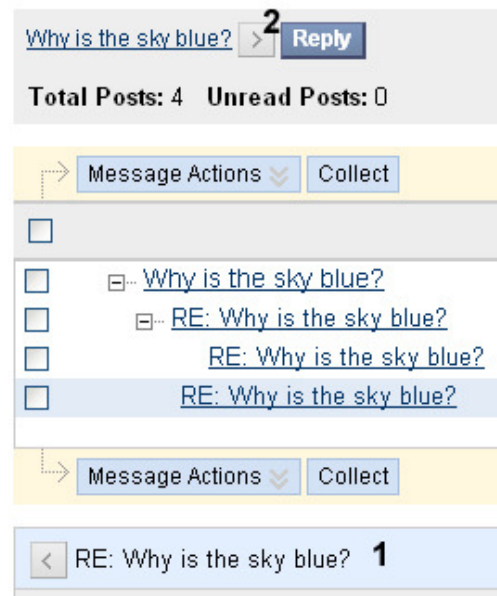
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Date	Thread	Author	Status	Unread Posts	Total Posts	
<input type="checkbox"/>	5/5/10 10:32 AM	<a href="#">Why is the sky blue?</a>	Glenn LeBlanc	Published	0	4	
<input type="checkbox"/>	5/5/10 10:35 AM	<a href="#">Why is the ocean blue?</a>	Glenn LeBlanc	Published	0	4	

**Tree View** allows you to get a “bird’s eye view” of the entire forum. Note the + sign to the left of each thread name. Click **Expand All** to display all replies to the thread, and **Collapse All** to return to the initial view.



When you click on the link for a message, a screen is displayed which shows the overview of the thread above and the text of the message below.

To read the messages in a Thread, click their individual links (above) or click the < (previous) or > (next) icons in the bottom panel to navigate through the messages. When you reach the end of the thread you will no longer see the **Next Message (>)** arrow. Click the **Move to Next Thread** arrow above the message to advance to the next thread.



**1** Note that no **Move to Next Message** arrow is available, indicating that you have reached the end of the Thread.

**2** Use the **Move to Next Thread** arrow to advance to the next Thread.

### Replying to messages

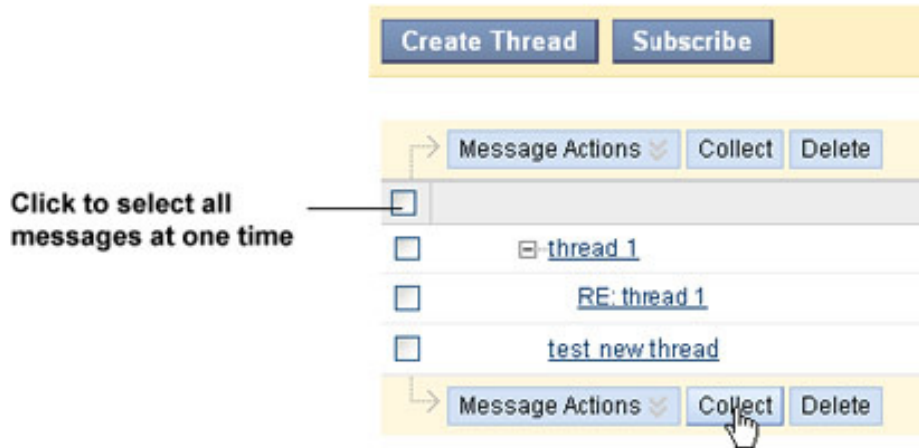
1. Click **Reply** in the message to which you are replying.
2. The original Subject appears in the Subject: line. Enter your message. (Do not click Save Draft.) To review the message you are replying to while composing your reply, click **View Original Post**.
3. Click **Submit**. The reply appears indented below the original message. (The original message and all replies are a **Thread**.)

### Managing messages

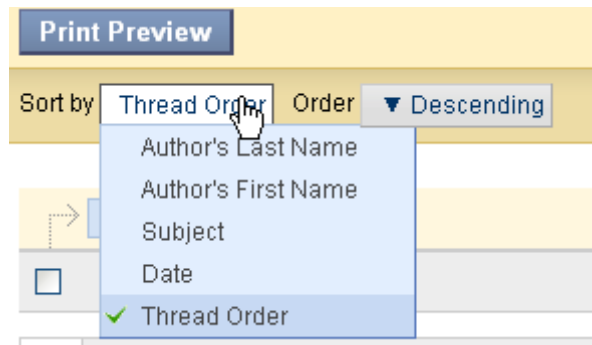
In **List View**, you can sort the messages in the default view of the forum by **Author**, **Date**, or **Thread** by clicking on the appropriate column heading. Toggling switches the sort order (most recent/oldest, A-Z/ Z-A, etc.)

You can use the **Collect** feature to show all of the messages on a single scrollable screen.

Start by individually selecting the messages you want to read, or click the box on top of the screen to select all postings at a single click (or Select **All** when viewing an individual thread). Click **Collect**.



You can sort the messages in the **Collect** view of the forum by **thread order**, **author's first/last name**, **date**, and **subject**, and in **either ascending or descending order** by selecting the appropriate sort type from the **Sort by:** pull-down menu.



You can filter by **Author**, **Status** (whether or not the posting has been published), and **Read Status** (Show All, Read, Unread). (Click the **Filter** button to show Filter options.)

