

Working with Groups

The Groups tool allows more focused small group discussion among a smaller number of participants, helping to reduce some of the concerns in using the public (whole-class) Discussion Board. This option is useful for team projects requiring private communication, as the group's work is visible only to members of that group. (For example, a faculty member teaching a management class used small groups for competing teams developing business plans.)

The Group creation process has been streamlined in version 9. In version 9 you can create *single groups* or *group sets*. **Group sets** allow you to set up multiple groups for a project all at the same time. So, say you wanted six groups for your "Developing a Business Plan" or "Reacting to Jane Eyre" project. In Blackboard 8 you had to create these six groups one at a time. In Blackboard 9 you create a Group Set – all six at once!

Group enrollment has also been streamlined. You can manually enroll students in groups as in Blackboard 8, or you can allow students to self enroll, or you can add students to groups randomly.

There are also options to allow students to create their own groups and edit student-created groups.

Creating a Single Group

1. Click **Groups** in the main course menu or select **Groups** from the **Users and Groups** menu in the **Control Panel**.
2. Click **Create Single Group**. Select either **Self-Enroll** or **Manual Enroll**.
3. Enter a Name and Description for the group.
4. Set the group's availability: **No, Yes, Sign-up Sheet Only** (allows students to sign up for the group even if it is not available if you selected the Self-Enroll option.)
5. Click the Tools that you want the students to be able to access in their group. As in Blackboard 8, if you select **Discussion Board**, one forum will automatically be created in each group.
6. Steps for enrolling students are different depending on whether you selected **Self-Enroll** or **Manual Enroll**.
 - **Self-Enroll groups**. Students will sign themselves up for the group using a sign-up sheet that they access when they click on the **Groups** link in the course menu. Enter a name and instructions for the Sign-up Sheet. Enter a maximum number of members and decide if you want to check **Show Members** (making it possible for students to see other group members before they sign up.) Leave **Allow students to sign-up from the Groups Area** checked. Click **Submit** when you're finished.

- **Manual Enroll groups.** In the **Membership** area, click on the students' names in the **Items to Select** box, then click the right arrow in the middle to put the students into the group. (Hold down the **Control** key and click multiple names to add more than one student at a time.) Click **Submit** when you're finished.

Creating a Group Set

1. Click **Create Group Set**. Select either **Self-Enroll, Manual Enroll, or Random Enroll**.
2. Enter a Name and Description for the group set. (Each group in the set will be numbered sequentially.)
3. Set the group's availability: **No, Yes, Sign-up Sheet Only** (allows students to sign up for the group even if it is not available if you selected the Self-Enroll option.)
4. Click the Tools that you want the students to be able to access in their group.
5. Steps for enrolling students are different depending on whether you selected **Self-Enroll, Manual Enroll, or Random Enroll**.
 - **Self-Enroll group sets.** Students will sign themselves up for the group using a sign-up sheet. Enter a name and instructions for the Sign-up Sheet. Enter a maximum number of members and decide if you want to check **Show Members** (making it possible for students to see other group members before they sign up.) Leave **Allow students to sign up from the Groups Area** checked. In the **Group Set Options** area, enter the number of groups that you want to create. Click **Submit** when you're finished.
 - **Manual Enroll group sets.** After entering the name and the number of groups you want to create, click **Submit**. Filter available group members by clicking one or both options. (Clicking **Remove Members already in a Group from the Available Members List** will prevent assigning a student to multiple groups.) In the **Group Set Enrollments** area, click **Expand All / Collapse All** to show / hide details for all groups. To assign students to groups, click on the students' names in the **Items to Select** box, and then click the right arrow in the middle to put the students into the group. (Hold down the **Control** key and click multiple names to add more than one student at a time.) You can delete a group or add additional groups here. Click **Submit**.
 - **Random Enroll group sets.** In the **Membership** area, decide how the number of groups should be determined (**Number of Students per Group** or **Number of Groups**) and how to enroll any remaining members. If you select **Manually add the remaining members to groups**, you will see a screen where you can add students manually by clicking on the students' names in

the **Items to Select** box, and then clicking the right arrow in the middle to put the students into the group.

Allowing Student-Created Groups

You have the option of giving students the capability to create their own groups, making it easy for them to work with peers.

- Click **Groups** in the main course menu or select **Groups** from the **Users and Groups** menu in the **Control Panel**.
- Click **Group Settings** to allow students to create their own Self-Enrollment Groups from the **Groups** page and to allow students to edit the name, description, and maximum number of students able to join their groups.
- Students can create their own groups by clicking **Tools** in the course menu, then **Groups**, or by clicking any **Groups** link set up by the faculty (**Small groups, Group projects, etc.**), then clicking **Create Group**, naming the group and adding an optional description, a sign-up sheet name, and the maximum number of members.

Accessing groups

- Click **Groups** in the main course menu or select **Groups** from the **Users and Groups** menu in the **Control Panel**.
- Click the link to the group.
- The group page appears, including a list of available tools and group members.
- Students access their groups from the **My Groups** menu below the course menu.