

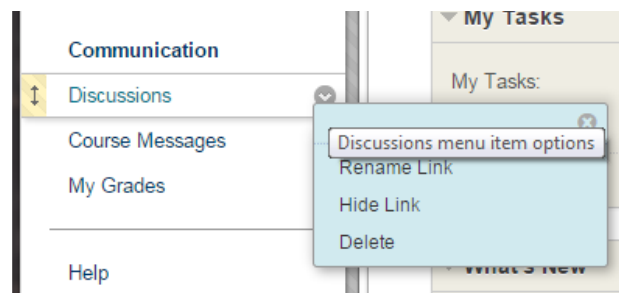
How to Create a Discussion

Discussions in Blackboard serve the same pedagogical function as in Angel; providing an area for participation and discussion between students, and occasionally students and faculty. However, details of creating and managing discussions is very different in Blackboard.

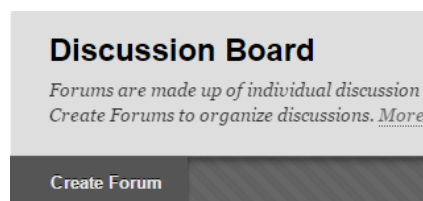
Quick Instructions

Part 1 – Creating a Discussion

1. In the Blackboard Menu on the left, click **Discussions** under the *Communications* header. This will bring you to the discussion aggregator, which shows all discussions in the course. It is up to you whether you want the aggregator itself to be visible to students, or if you only want them to see the discussions within the Content Folders you create.
2. If you wish to hide the Discussions Aggregator from students, click on the chevron to the right of the link and select **Hide Link**.



3. Click on **Create Forum** near the top of the screen.



4. On the *Create Forum* page, provide the name you want displayed to students. It is recommended that you add a notation in the title to remind you and students where the Forum belongs in the course (e.g. M1D1) followed by a descriptive title of the content of the discussion. This will be particularly useful later when you are setting up the *Grade Center*.
5. Provide Instructions for the discussion, including your starter question, in the text box labeled *Description*.
6. Under the *Forum Availability* section, make sure the option *Available* is set to **Yes**.

7. If you wish the discussion to only be available for a set amount of time, select the **Display After** and **Display Until** check boxes to enable the date and time selections. Note that you can select either the *After* or *Until* option, or both.
8. There are several options under *Forum Settings*. For most discussions you only need to worry about the following:
 - a. *Viewing Threads/Replies*
 - i. **Standard View** – Allows students to review other replies to the topic prior to making their initial post. This helps avoid having multiple initial posts containing similar information.
 - ii. **Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum** – Requires Students to make an initial post prior to being able to review other student posts. This prevents students from “Cherry Picking” from other responses to create their post.
 - b. **Grade** – It is recommended that you always set a Discussion to Grade Discussion Forum as this gives access to several useful reviewing tools. If you do not want the forum to be graded, still select this option, but set the *Points* possible to zero.
9. Click **Submit**. You have now created a discussion. At this point you may simply direct students to the Discussions aggregator and have them participate from there. However, most faculty prefer to have a link to the discussion within the Content Folder (Module).

Part 2 – Publishing a Discussion to a Content Folder (Module)

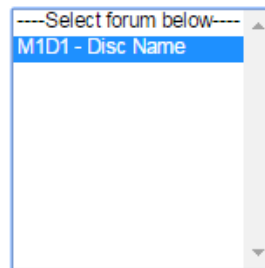
1. When you are in a folder, point to *Tools* and click **Discussion Board**.



2. On the *Create Link: Discussion Board* page, select the second option: **Select a Discussion Board Forum**, then highlight the name of the Discussion you want to link to.

- Link to Discussion Board Page
- Select a Discussion Board Forum

Select a Discussion Board Forum

A dropdown menu with a blue border. The text inside reads '----Select forum below----' at the top, followed by 'M1D1 - Disc Name' which is highlighted in blue. There are small upward and downward arrow icons at the top and bottom right of the menu.

3. Click **Next**.
4. Click **Submit** on the following page.

Advanced Options for - Part 1

There are a large number of discussion forum setting that can be adjusted to customize the user experience. Below are the options not covered in the walkthrough.

Subscribe – This series of options allows students to get email notifications when new posts are made. While there is generally no reason to not allow students to subscribe, it is strongly recommended that you do not select the option Include body of post in the email, so students have to return to Blackboard to participate in the discussion.

Create and Edit – There are several options in this section:

Allow Anonymous Posts – Generally you will not want to select this option as it will prevent you from grading participation in a forum. Additionally, having posts attached to user names lowers the likelihood of the discussion getting out of hand or devolving into ad hominid attacks.

Allow Author to Delete Own Posts – There is generally no reason to allow this option, as it can lead to students accidentally deleting posts.

Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts – Allowing students to edit their posts can be useful in letting students correct spelling and grammar errors, or other things that are noticed after the post is made. However, it can also be used by students to try and erase evidence of out of line posts, or to try and make changes after grades are assigned. You should weigh the pros and cons of this option and choose the approaches that you are most comfortable with.

Allow Members to Create New Threads – This option should be enabled unless you are using discussion leaders to start threads.

Allow File Attachments – Allows students to attach files to their posts. There is generally no reason not to allow this.

Allow Users to Reply with Quote – Allows students to show the text of the post they are replying to within their own post. Generally there is no reason not to allow this.

Force Moderation of Posts – This option will stop student posts from being displayed to the class until it is approved by the instructor or an assigned moderator. This option adds a lot of work to running a discussion forum, and is normally not necessary.

Allow Post Tagging – This option allows the instructor to add “tags” to posts, which act as key words that students can use to search a discussion board. This option adds a lot of work to running a discussion forum, and is normally not necessary.

Allow Members to Rate Posts – This option adds a star rating system that allows students to rate other student posts. This function has no statistical tracking, and will often confuse students who may think it is an evaluation from the instructor. As such, it is recommended that you do not use this option.

Advanced Options for Part 2

You will notice the options to change the name and availability of the discussion link on this page. To avoid confusion, it is strongly recommended that you do not adjust these settings at the link level, but make all name and availability settings and changes in the discussion forum itself located in the Discussions Aggregator.

Color of Name – If you wish to highlight a Discussion Link to students, you may change the name color of the displayed name to make it stand out. Please use this option with care, and make sure any color choice you make is accessible friendly. You may use <http://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/> to check if a particular color is accessible (look for the Pass/Fail under each font size as you go down the page).

Track Number of Views – If set to **Yes**, this will create a log of the students who have clicked on the link. This does not let you know if a student has actually read and

understood the content, only that they have opened the link. You should only use this option when it is important to track the view on an item, as overuse will slow the entire Blackboard system down.