

Best Practices for Using the Forums Tool

Overview

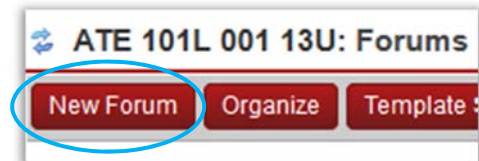
Before creating a Forum it is important to have a conceptual understanding of how discussions are organized within the Forums Tool.

- **FORUM** – Represents the **top level** of the discussion hierarchy (e.g. Week One, Unit One, etc.) and can be thought of as the room you might reserve to hold a discussion.
- **TOPIC** – Represents the **mid-level** in the discussion hierarchy (e.g. Chapter One Questions) and be thought of as the questions you would write on the board for the group to discuss.
- **CONVERSATION** – Represents the **lower-level** of the discussion hierarchy (e.g. Answers to Chapter One Questions) and would represent the conversations that take place around each topic.



Recommended Steps for Setting up Forums

1. Click the **“New Forum”** button at the top of the Forums Tool.
2. Enter in a Title for the Forum. Use a title that best represents the “top level” of your discussion (e.g. Week One, Unit One, etc.)
3. Leave the Short and Full Descriptions boxes **EMPTY**, as text in these boxes confuse students and clutter up the Forums screen.
4. Make any desired changes to the Forum Posting and Permission settings
5. Scroll down and click on the **“Save Settings and Add Topic”** button.
6. Enter in a Title for the first Topic. Use a title that best represents the topic of this discussion (e.g. Chapter One Questions).
7. In the Short Description box, type in **“Please read full description below...”**
 - a. NOTE: This is helpful as it prompts students to click on the link to expand the full description. You can stop entering in this text once students get the hang of the system.
8. In the Full Description box start by typing in: **INSTRUCTIONS: To post, click the Topic title (e.g. Chapter One Questions) to access the topic and then click the “Start a New Conversation” button.**
 - a. NOTE: You can stop entering in this text once students get the hang of the system.

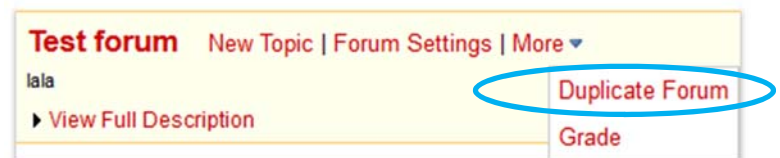


9. After the instructions, type in the question or issue you wish the students to respond to or comment on (e.g. Please share some facts about yourself and why you are taking this course.).
10. Scroll down, make desired changes to settings and then click the “Save” button.
11. Click “**New Topic**” to add a topic to the forum. Without a topic, students cannot start new conversation to post their messages.

The screenshot shows a form for creating a new topic. It includes a 'Topic Title' field with 'Topic 1' entered. Below it is a 'Short Description (255 characters max)' field with '220 chars remain' and the text 'Please read full description below...'. The 'Full Description' section features a rich text editor with various formatting tools (bold, italic, underline, text color, background color, link, unlink, list, indent, outdent, etc.) and a 'Format' dropdown set to 'Normal'. Below the editor, there is instructional text: 'INSTRUCTIONS: To post, click the Topic title (e.g. Chapter One Questions) to access the topic and then click the "Start a New Conversation" button to post your messages.' and a 'Question: What is the best feature of this new application?'.

12. To continue setting up more forums and topics in the same format, you can use the “Duplicate” feature.

- a. At the forum level, Click on the “More” button. Click on “Duplicate Forum”.
- b. The next screen will display the Forum title with the word “Copy” attached to it. It will also display the short and full description of the Forum to be duplicated.
- c. The Forum will be duplicated and will include any topics that were created for that Forum.
- d. Duplicating Topics follows the same steps.
Note: topics can only be duplicated within the same Forum.

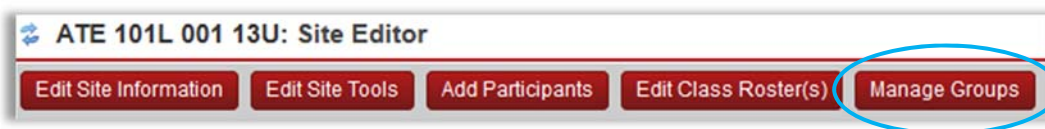


Group Access to Forums

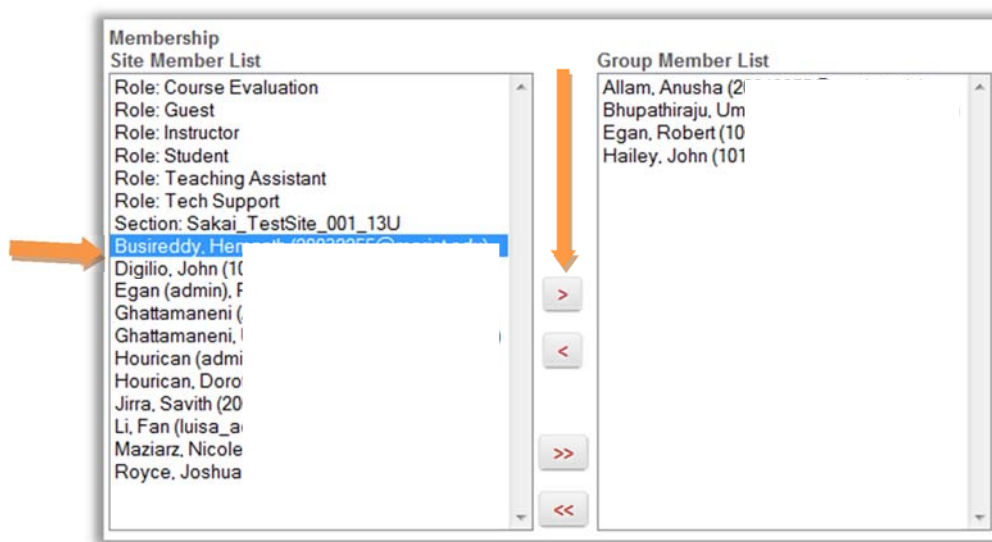
Group discussion is a good way to maximize individual presence and to increase participation in an online learning environment. Creating group-aware forums is a two-step process. First, groups must be created in the **Site Editor** tool. Then, the groups must be associated with specific **Forums** (or topics).

Step 1: Create Groups in Site Editor

1. From the “**Site Editor**” tool bar, click “**Manage Groups**”, then click “**Create New Group**”.



2. Give the group a name (Title).
3. Select students from the Membership – Site Member List to add to the Group List (highlight more than one student by holding the Ctrl key), and use the single arrow to move students into the group. You do not need to add yourself to these groups; as an instructor you have permission to access all forum posts.



NOTE: The tool is designed so that you can add a student to more than one group. If you are creating exclusive groups, you should keep a hard copy of your groups to ensure that each student is only added once. After you have added all students, you can view the groups through the **Site Roster** tool.

4. When you have chosen the students, click **Add**. You will be brought to the Group List page. The “size” is the number of students in each group.
5. Now you will see these groups listed as an “Access” option in most iLearn tools.

NOTE: Once created, groups can be used in the following iLearn tools: Announcements, Assignments, Calendar, Forums, Messages, Resources, Tests & Quizzes, Gradebook

Step 2: Associate Groups with Forums or Topics

You can allow group access in a forum or a topic. The directions are the same for both.

1. Click **Forum Settings** or **Topic Settings**
2. Scroll down to **Permissions**

- Click the dropdown menu to select the permission level for each group of participants. The default permission level for **instructor** is **Owner**.
- To assign one forum/topic to one group (i.e. Group 1), select **None for Students**, and then **Contributor for Group 1**. This removes access from the generic student role and makes this forum or topic only accessible to Group 1.
- Click Customize button to set up custom permission level for that group.

Role	Permission Level	Customize
Course Evaluation	Contributor	Customize
Guest	Contributor	Customize
Instructor	Owner	Customize
Student	None	Customize
Teaching Assistant	Owner	Customize
Tech Support	Owner	Customize
Group 1	Contributor	Customize
Group 2	None	Customize
Group 3	None	Customize
Group 4	None	Customize

☐ New Forum
☐ New Topic
☒ New Conversation
☒ Reply
☐ Post to Gradebook

☐ Change Settings
☒ Read
☒ Mark as Read
☐ Moderate Messages

Edit Messages
☒ None
☐ Own
☐ All

Delete Messages
☒ None
☐ Own
☐ All

Recommended Steps for Viewing and Grading Forums

- To view student messages, choose a conversation to view all messages. Alternatively, you can view all messages of one conversation on one page by clicking “Display Message Content” button on the top.
- To grade forum messages, you need to link the forum to a gradebook item first in Forum Settings.
- When the forum or topic is linked to a gradebook item, there’ll be a “Grade” button under a student message title. Click “Grade” to enter grade points and comments for that message.
- Alternatively, you can also view and grade all messages authored by a single student or under a single topic at once. **(Please see the Statistics and Grading Section Below)**

Grading

Gradebook Item: Discussion

New Dinosaurs

Joshua (Jul 11, 2013 10:14 AM) - Read by: 5 Reply

Grade | Edit | Delete Message

Using the Statistics and Grading Tool in Forums

1. Click on the **Statistics and Grading** button.

Statistics & Grading

WARNING: If you have a fairly large course roster or very active forums, this may take a few seconds to load.

2. You will see your class roster with the forum statistics listed.

Forums / Statistics & Grading				
Statistics & Grading by User Statistics & Grading by Topic				
Name▲	Authored	Read	Unread	Percent Read
Allam	1	148	5	97%
Bhupatiraju, Uma	5	25	128	16%

3. Click on the “Statistics & Grading by Topic”. **WARNING** If you have a fairly large course roster or very active forums, this may take a few seconds to load.

Forum Title▲	Topic Title	Date	Total Messages
About upcoming topics	test subject	Jun 18, 2013 9:20 AM	6
About upcoming topics	Discussion in Chrome	Jun 21, 2013 12:02 PM	11

4. Click on one of the “Forum Title”.

Forums / Statistics & Grading / About upcoming topics					
Select a gradebook item: -----					
Filter by group: All Participants					
Name▲		Authored	Read	Unread	Percent Read
Allam,	Details	0	25	0	100%
Bhupa	Details	0	6	19	24%
Busireddy, Hemanth	Details	5	19	6	76%

DETAILS: Click on the “Details” to see the messages authored and read by that specific student

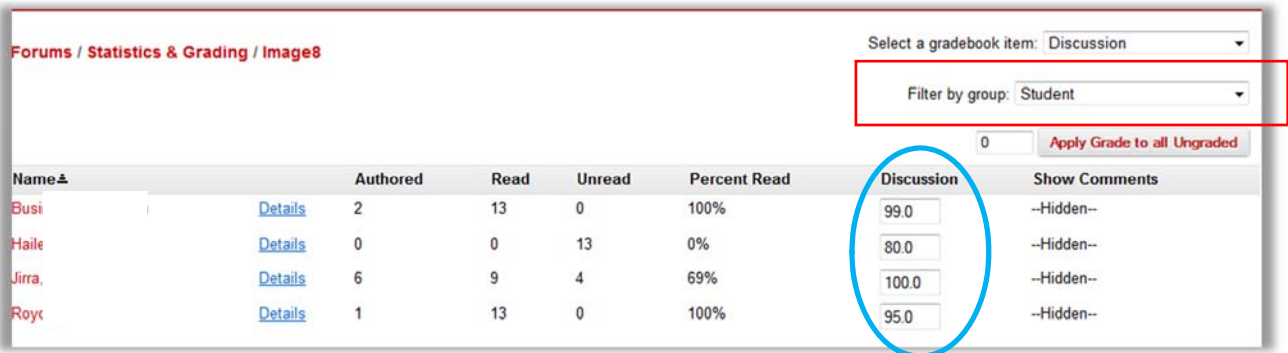
GRADE: Click on the “Grade” to get the grading dialogue box. (See below)

SELECT a Gradebook Item: Click on this to choose the gradebook item associated with that particular forum for grading. When you choose from the drop down box, you will be able to enter grades and comments for that specific discussion for students who have completed that discussion.

Forums / Statistics & Grading / About upcoming topics							
Select a gradebook item: Discussion							
Filter by group: All Participants							
0		Apply Grade to all Ungraded					
Name▲		Authored	Read	Unread	Percent Read	Discussion	Show Comments
Allam,	Details	0	25	0	100%	N/A	N/A
Bhupa	Details	0	6	19	24%	N/A	N/A
Busireddy, Hemanth	Details	5	19	6	76%	99.0	--Hidden--

5. Grade Group Forums

Follow steps outlined above. Then click on “Filter by Group”. You can enter grades for a group of students.



Forums / Statistics & Grading / Image8

Select a gradebook item: Discussion

Filter by group: Student

0 Apply Grade to all Ungraded

Name▲		Authored	Read	Unread	Percent Read	Discussion	Show Comments
Busi	Details	2	13	0	100%	99.0	--Hidden--
Haile	Details	0	0	13	0%	80.0	--Hidden--
Jirra,	Details	6	9	4	69%	100.0	--Hidden--
Royce	Details	1	13	0	100%	95.0	--Hidden--

NOTE: Forum settings can be complicated. If you have any questions, please contact Academic Technology at (845) 575 – 3836 for a consult.