What is a discussion forum?

A discussion forum enables participants to communicate online using text. Moodle allows tutors to set up and configure online forums for groups or sub-groups of students, which can include text and other media. Participants can receive posts by email, and/or log onto Moodle to view them. On Moodle, **posts** (messages) are arranged by **thread** (all responses to a given post), with replies indented below their antecedent post.

When are forums useful?

- As a **group formation and bonding** "check-in" space at the beginning of a course.
- Class teacher indicates a reading and asks an **open question**, e.g. "for comments".
- Class teacher posts documents with specific questions to be **answered re the material**.
- Students are required to **post presentation material** prior to a seminar with or without inviting **peer evaluation**.
- For **mutual support** and/or collaborative learning where students are physically remote – on placements for example, and risk feeling isolated
- When there is a need to **record contributions or thought processes**

How to participate in a Moodle discussion forum

1 - Log into Moodle and select the appropriate course. Scroll down to find the name of the forum

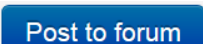This is the Moodle icon for a discussion forum.

2 - Click on the forum's name to view a description of the forum and a list of the discussion topics.

3 - The topics are listed from the newest to the oldest. Click the discussion topic's title to view and participate in the discussion.

4 - The discussion and all replies are listed from oldest to newest. Click reply on the appropriate discussion to post your ideas and comments.
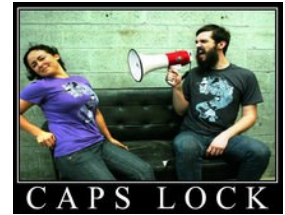
5 - Type your message in the text entry box.

Click **Post to forum** to finish.

To watch a video on how to participate in a Moodle discussion forum go here

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Be nice, be effective:

the supreme law of forum behaviour

Be nice

- No 'flaming' - in other words, avoid personal attacks, pettiness, abuse. Respect other users, and if you disagree with them, explain why.
- No 'trolling' - trolls are posts deliberately designed to provoke an angry response. That doesn't mean you can't be controversial, if you really mean it.
- No personal disputes - if it gets personal, take it offline.
- Don't be patronising or sarcastic. It comes across about ten times worse online.
- Avoid typing in ALL CAPS, which is considered shouting or yelling.
- Learn to let go - don't keep harping on about the same thing, or harking back to previous arguments. It is rarely productive, and you always end up going round in circles.
- If someone else's post offends you, don't fight back online. It can be easy to sound rude without meaning to, especially if English is not your native language. However, if you really are troubled by the post, don't respond - take it to your lecturer instead.

Be effective

- Post in the most appropriate forum (and only in one forum).
- Stay on topic - try to focus on the original topic. In particular, don't change subject in the middle of an existing thread - just start a new topic.
- Conversely, don't start a new topic if your post relates to an existing one - reply to the existing thread instead. Make sure you reply to the appropriate post, not just the last post in the thread
- When starting a new topic, make the subject line clear and informative. It makes the topic easy to find.
- Make sure you're understood, even by non-native English speakers. Try to write full sentences, and avoid text-message abbreviations or slang.
- If asking a question, provide as much information as possible, what you've already considered, where you've already read etc.
- Read what's already there before posting. You may be repeating what others have already said or asked.

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