

Discussion Board

Blackboard provides a discussion board as a tool to use in the virtual classroom setting. The discussion board is asynchronous, so everyone does not have to be available at the same time to have a conversation.

An additional advantage of the discussion board is that student conversations are logged and organized. Conversations are grouped into threads that contain a main posting and all related replies.

Discussion Threads-Explained

Blackboard defines a discussion thread as the ongoing student/instructor contribution to the online discussion topic. But what does that mean and how does it fit with the Discussion board?

Let's start from the beginning. Your instructor has created a Discussion Forum (DF for short), a place where every student can go to talk to the instructor and to one another. Your conversations inside this DF are similar to your conversations in the classroom. Your instructor may ask questions that you need to respond to (Discussion Questions) or post comments for you to read and consider.

Going a little deeper, let's break the actual conversation apart. A thread is a piece of an online conversation that you have with your instructor or your fellow classmates. One person begins the thread by clicking on the **Add New Thread** button at the top of the Discussion Forum. You fill out the message form (similar to an email message) and submit your message. Your instructor and classmates will read the thread you wrote and may choose to respond. Any responses to your original thread display under your thread heading. Responses are indented slightly so that you can quickly determine the main thoughts (threads) in the classroom discussion. So, in essence, a thread is just a comment that you make in written form in the Blackboard classroom.

A threaded discussion is just that. It is an ongoing discussion, started with one thread and continuing on with several responses. You can always determine the original thread because it is listed at the top of the discussion and all of the responses have the RE: designator in front of the subject portion. These discussions can become quite lengthy and complex or be short and to the point. It depends on the topic and how much your instructor and fellow students like to write.

One important tip for effective use of the Discussion Board is that you should always start a new thread when you have a new thought that is *unrelated* to the previous thread. If you are responding to something in a previous thread, by all means, post your comment as a response. However, if you have a thought that is off the current topic of discussion, begin a new thread for discussion. This way, it is easier to determine that there are 5 main topics of discussion, each with their own discussion thread, rather than one long, generalized topic. It's like the Table of Contents in a book. When you look at the DF, you can tell immediately what people are talking about because the main thoughts are laid out as threads. Otherwise you may have to read through 15 or 20 responses to find another main point.

Follow the steps below to enter the Discussion Board:

1. Click on the **Discussion Board** button on the toolbar to display the main *Discussion Board* page, pictured below.



Note: You can also access the *Discussion Board* from the **Communications** page.

2. Click in the title of the forum to open it. This forum example uses the title *Introduction Question*

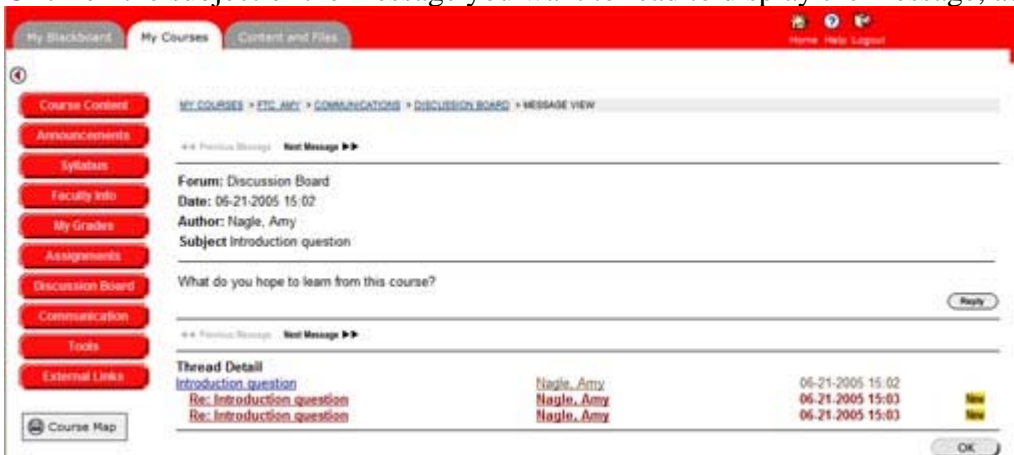


Reading and Responding to Messages

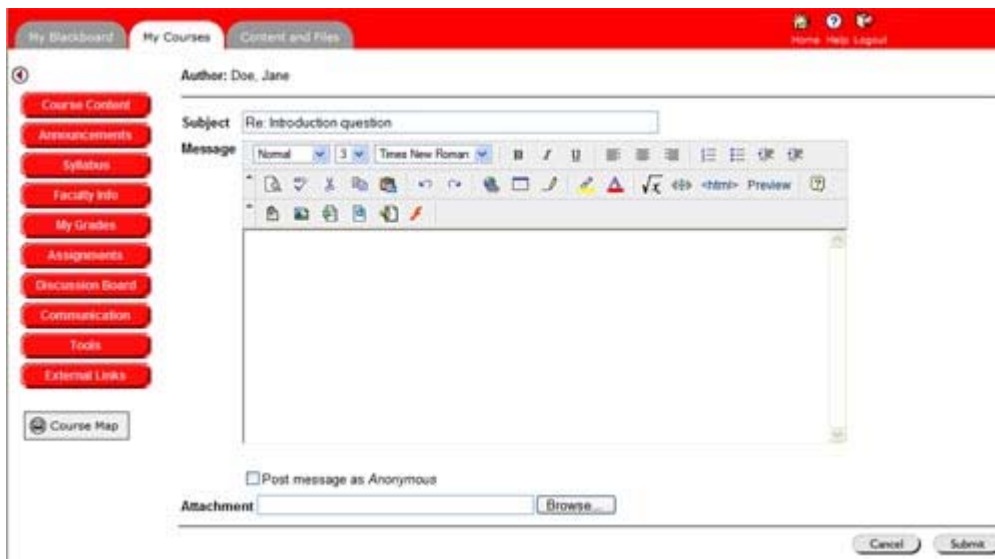
Once a message has been posted, it appears as a link with the subject of the message appearing as the name. You can read messages at any time.

Follow the directions below to read and respond to messages.

1. Click on the subject of the message you want to read to display the message, as pictured in the sample below.



2. Click on the **Next Message** button under the main text of the message to read the next message posted in response to this thread.
3. Click on the **Reply** button to display the *Your Response* screen, pictured below.



4. Click in the *Message* text field.
5. Type your response.
6. Click on the **Preview** button to preview the message before sending.
7. Click on the **Submit** button to submit the message to the Discussion Board.

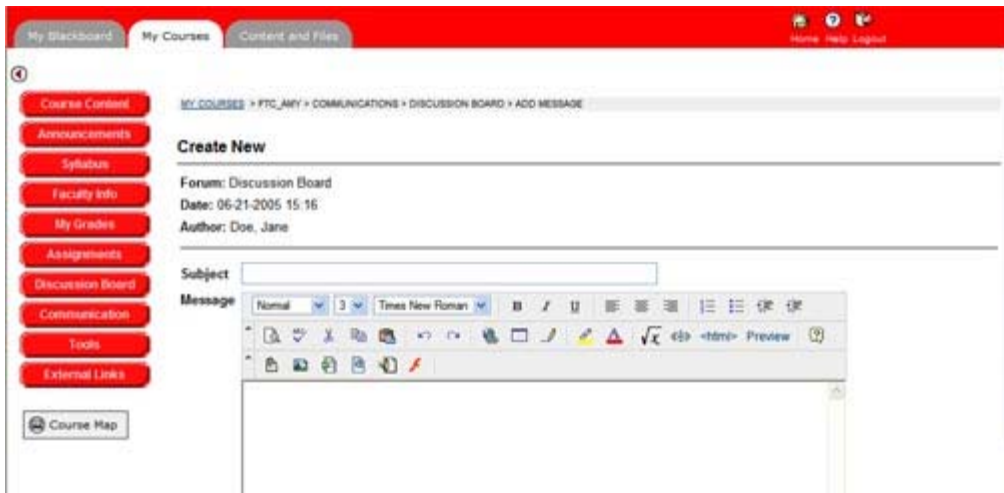
Note: All of the students enrolled in the class will be able to read and respond to your message.

Creating a Message Thread

Anytime you have a new topic to discuss or question to ask that isn't related to any of the previous threads on the Discussion Board, you should post a new thread. This makes the Discussion Board easier to navigate because each thread is a separate and distinct thought.

Follow the directions below to create a new thread:

1. Click on the **Add New Thread** button at the top of the Discussion Board window to display the *Create New Message* screen, pictured below.



2. Click in the *Subject* field.
3. Enter a subject (topic) for the message.
4. Click in the *Message* field.
5. Type your message.
6. Click on the **Preview** button to preview the message before sending.
7. Click on the **Submit** button to submit the message to the Discussion Board.

Note: All of the students enrolled in the class will be able to read and respond to your message and view your attachment.

Navigating in the Discussion Board

The discussion board contains some specific navigational tools used to navigate between messages. When moving throughout the messages and threads, be sure to use the following features:

- **View Unread Messages:** Allows you to switch from reading all unread messages only or all messages.
- **Expand All:** Opens a thread to view the topic and the associated responses.
- **Collapse All:** Hides all responses and displays only the main thread.
- **Show Options:** Brings up several quick key buttons that can be used when reading notes.



- **Select All:** Allows you to select all of the messages in the forum (usually for collection).
- **Unselect:** Unselects all of your previously selected items.
- **Invert:** Switches the selection mode of your items. For instance, if they were previously selected, they now become unselected.
- **Read:** Marks all of the selected messages as Read.
- **Unread:** Marks all of the selected messages as Unread.
- **Collect:** Collects all of the selected messages onto one page, usually for printing.

Deleting messages and threads

You **do not** have the ability to delete messages once they are posted. Only your instructor has this privilege. If you post something that you do not want to remain on the discussion, contact your instructor to remove it.

Copy and Paste

You can write messages for the discussion board in a word processor such as Microsoft Word. This allows you to use the spell-checking features of Word before posting your message.

Follow the directions below to copy and paste text from another application:

1. Open Microsoft Word (or another word processing program) if it is not already open.
2. Type your message
3. Spell check your message. This is not a requirement, but it is always a good idea.
4. Select all of the text of your message by:
 - a. Click once at the beginning of the text
 - b. Hold down the **Shift** key
 - c. Click again at the end of the text
5. Click on **Edit, Copy** from the menu bar.
6. Press the **Alt** and **Tab** keys at the same time to switch to your Web browser.
7. Reply to an existing message or start a new thread.
8. Enter a subject for your message.
9. Click in the *Message* area.
10. Click on **Edit, Paste** from the menu bar of your Web browser.
11. Click on **Submit** button at the bottom of the page
12. Click **OK** on the receipt page.