

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.

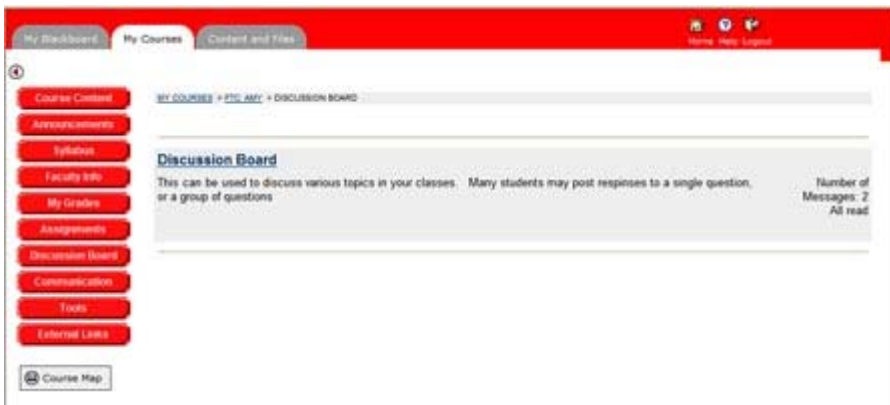
Going a little deeper, let's break the actual conversation apart. A thread is a piece of an online conversation that you have with your instructor or your fellow classmates. One person begins the thread by clicking on the **Add New Thread** button at the top of the Discussion Forum. You fill out the 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*

