# Blackboard Tips & Tricks

## Discussion Boards

With the upgrade to Blackboard 9.1 SP 14 in December 2013, Blackboard introduced a new "enhancement" which some may find more frustrating than helpful. In either the "List View" or "Tree View" within a forum, *simply scrolling down the screen will automatically mark every thread in that forum as "Read."* ITS has posted a recommended workaround for that behavior on our Known Issues web site for users wishing to have greater control over what is marked as "Read" and when.

You can create a course level Discussion Board in one of three places:
1. Through the **Coursework** link in the course. Click on **Tools** and select **Discussion Board**. Then click on the **Create New Forum** button. Note that ITS generally recommends that faculty use the "Select a Discussion Board Forum" radio button to link to the newly created discussion forum, directly within a folder, learning unit, or lesson plan
2. Through the **Discussions** link in the course. Click on the **Create Forum** button.
3. Through the **Control Panel** > **Course Tools** > **Discussion Board**. Click on the linked name of the course. Click on the **Create Forum** button. Discussion forums created here will automatically appear under the Discussion link in the course. You can also embed a link to a forum created here by following the steps outlined in #1 above, choosing the **Select a Discussion Board Forum** radio button and the specific Discussion Board Forum from the list of existing forums.

Under forum settings, for a course level discussion board, the following settings are recommended (listed by section):

### View Threads/Replies *(NEW SP 14)*
- Consider your options.
   - *Standard View* allows students to see all threads as soon as they are posted.
   - To encourage original thought without the need to moderate individual posts, select *Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum*.
      - This option is *only* available when you "Allow Members to Create New Threads." When this option is selected, students will not see any other posts (from students or instructors) until *after* they have submitted one of their own.

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- When choosing this option, make certain to provide detailed instructions about the discussion assignment in the forum "Description" field.

**Grade**
- Determine whether you will grade student participation.  If you plan to grade student participation in the discussion board, select **Grade Forum** and assign the points possible for participation in that forum.  Also determine the interval you wish to use to see view posts in need of grading.
- Determine whether you wish to **Add** a **Rubric** to be used when grading the forum.

**Subscribe**
- Consider allowing members to subscribe to the forum.  Students who choose to subscribe to the forum will receive an email notification every time a new post is added.  They can opt in or out of subscriptions at any time.

**Create and Edit**
- Do NOT Allow Anonymous Posts.
- Do NOT Allow Authors to Delete Own Posts.
- Do NOT Allow Authors to Edit Own Published Posts.
- Do NOT Allow Members to Create New Threads unless the Discussion Board is part of a Group or you specifically want the Discussion Board to be completely open to new topics.  A "Help" forum is a good example of one where students should be allowed to post new threads in order to introduce their individual questions.
- Be aware that when you allow students to attach files, the files they attach will count toward the total allotted course quota.   Note that Discussion Boards should *not* be used solely to collect paper assignments.  The Blackboard Assignment tool and Turnitin Assignments provide a better means of collecting paper assignments.
- Be aware that when you allow users to reply with quote, individual posts may become quite lengthy and more cumbersome to read.
- Do NOT force moderation of posts.  Some faculty force moderation initially in order to assure each student submits their original thought without being influenced by the posts of others in the class.

**Additional Options**
- Do NOT Allow Post Tagging (Blackboard reports tagging can slow the loading of Discussion Boards).
- Consider the value of allowing members to rate each other's posts.

If you have set the Forum to *not* allow students to create new threads, **you must create the initial open ended question (thread)** to begin the Discussion Board. Click on the linked name of the Discussion Board and then click on **Create Thread**.

If discussion board participation is to be graded, you MUST indicate that in the Forum Settings at the time the discussion board forum is created.   To check the settings or to change them, click on the gray circle with the downward pointing

arrow beside the name of the forum to expand the drop down list of options and select **Edit**.

Prior to grading discussion board participation, it is highly recommended that you lock the forum to preclude students from making additional posts after the published deadline.  From the forum screen, click on the box in front of the thread(s) you wish to lock.  Then click on the **Thread Actions** button above the forum thread(s) to expand the options and select **Lock**. The Status column will show each thread is "Locked."   After the forum is locked, click on the **Grade Forum** button at the top of the screen.  That will take you to a Grade Discussion Forum Users screen where you will find a **Grade** button for each student.  Clicking on the **Grade** button will open a screen showing just that student's posts and a place to enter a grade.

**Tutorials:**
http://www.siue.edu/its/bb/fac_staff/bb_step4c.shtml#discussion_boards

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