

Discussions

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The discussions, or in other words, discussion board feature of BlackBoard can be accessed by clicking on the “Discussions” button on the Course Tools menu.

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A listing of required postings will appear. Each posting will be identified with a title and posting criteria.

For example: Week 5. It is titled as Exploring the Underwater Environment and directs the student to “post a four sentence or longer paragraph indicating the challenges you believe you may face with yourself and/or your proposed basket project in the water environment.”

Begin working on the required posting, by clicking on its title.

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The linked screen will display instructor specified information for the posting.

For example: a description for the posting, the topic type, grading criteria, peer review policy, posting requirements and user identification.

Your instructor can be contacted for further details in this regard.

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To create a message, or in other words, to begin your posting, click on the Create Message button in the lower left-hand corner of the window.

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Next, enter appropriate text in the Subject and Message boxes.

Add an attachment, if required, by clicking on the Add Attachments button.

Optionally, click on the Preview, Cancel or Save as Draft buttons if desired.

Be sure to complete your posting by clicking on the Post button. Your posting will now be posted to your instructor and **all** class attendees.

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Note the two areas indicated with arrows that verify that your posting was correctly posted. It is now ready to be read by your instructor and classmates.

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An asterisk will appear to the right of the Discussions tool in the Course Tools listing when you have received a new reply to a posting.

Also note that the Week 5 topic denotes “1 new message” in parenthesis.

Click on the “1 New” text link to read the reply.

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The reply to the original posting will appear as shown – “Rob, I enjoyed reading your e-mail, etc.

The reply will denote the subject, the author and the reply date and time.

You have the option to reply or forward the message using the buttons provided.

The next screen display results from a click on the reply button.

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To *reply* to a message, type text in the message box.

Note that the subject box will already contain the subject to which you are replying. This is denoted by the letters RE preceding the posting title.

Be sure to click on the Post button when finished.

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Week 5 now denotes 2 “read” messages in parenthesis. The first message was sent to the instructor and the second message was the reply to the responder.

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A click on the Week 5 subject link will reveal some additional buttons that often require clarification and consideration for effective use.

The expand button can be activated to show all threads to the major topic including responses to replies from other posters. The collapse button collapses the viewable threads to the highest level of the discussion. The expand button is the suggested default.

The unthreaded button allows you to see messages listed in chronological order.

The threaded button allows you to display messages with all replies grouped under the original message. This is the suggested mode of operation.

The unread button, as opposed to the all button, will greatly reduce your need to scan all your past message since it only lists presently unread messages.

The create printable view button allows you to print all threads within a discussion topic onto paper for easier viewing.

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Your instructor may have also added “Other Topics” for discussion purposes.

For example: Netiquette Rules and/or Cyber Café.

Use the same process previously described to work within these areas.

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Return to the Home Page by clicking on the Content Page button on the Course Tool menu.

Viewing Threaded and Unthreaded Messages

When messages are threaded, they display as a series of messages on the same subject. The original message is listed first, followed by replies to that message. By default, messages in threaded topics are listed in threaded view, but you can change the view to unthreaded. Unthreaded messages are listed in chronological order.

From the messages screen, do one of the following:

- To display messages in chronological order, click **Unthreaded**.
- To display messages with all replies grouped under the original message, click **Threaded**.
- To expand a thread, next to the thread's subject, click the **Expand** icon.
- To expand all threads within the topic, in the table heading row, click **Expand All**.
- To collapse a thread, next to the thread's subject, click the **Collapse** icon.
- To collapse all threads within the topic, in the table heading row, click **Collapse All**.
- To display all messages in a thread, click its **Display Complete Thread** icon