

## Discussions

The Discussions tool is a communication tool that can be used to enhance a course site. This feature is similar to a chat, but is designed for asynchronous use, users are not present at the same time to converse on-line. To contrast, email is asynchronous.

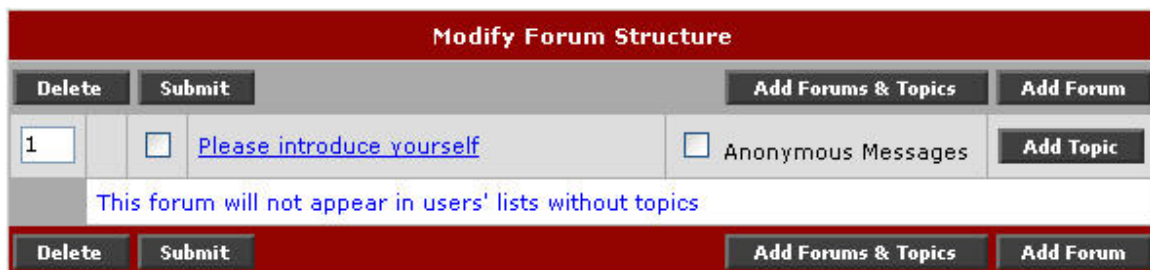
An additional advantage of the discussion board is that student conversations are logged and organized. Conversations are grouped into threads that contain a main posting and all related replies.

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### Adding a Forum

1. Select **Create New Forum**. The Add Forum page will be displayed.
2. Add a **Forum Title**. This will appear on the Discussions page.
3. Enter a **Description** for the forum. This information will appear beneath the forum on the Discussions page.  
**Suggestion:** Be very specific about your expectations in your description. Students may have very different ideas about what constitutes appropriate message length or content.
4. Check the **Allow anonymous messages** box if you wish to allow students to post anonymously if they wish. These messages are truly anonymous if you check this box. There is no way for faculty to retrieve information about the poster.
5. **Hide this forum:** Choosing this option will hide the forum from the students' view. You may want to choose this if you aren't sure when a particular forum will be available to students.
6. Choose a Start and/or End Date to have the discussion forum appear or disappear from students' view on a certain date. Leaving the option set to No will display the forum immediately and it will not disappear.  
**Note:** You must set the date and click the radio button to the left of the date option.
7. Click **Save** or **Save and Add Topic** to save your forum.

**Note:** The forum will not appear to students until you have added a topic.



The screenshot shows a web interface titled "Modify Forum Structure" with a red header. Below the header is a table with two columns: "Forum" and "Actions". The first row contains a forum with ID "1", title "Please introduce yourself", and an unchecked checkbox for "Anonymous Messages". To the right of the "Anonymous Messages" checkbox is an "Add Topic" button. Below the table, a message states "This forum will not appear in users' lists without topics". At the bottom of the interface are buttons for "Delete", "Submit", "Add Forums & Topics", and "Add Forum".

Modify Forum Structure	
Delete	Submit
Add Forums & Topics	Add Forum
1	<input type="checkbox"/> Please introduce yourself <input type="checkbox"/> Anonymous Messages <b>Add Topic</b>
This forum will not appear in users' lists without topics	
Delete	Submit
Add Forums & Topics	Add Forum

Figure 1 – Modify Forums and Topics

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## Modify a Forum and/or Add a Topic

1. Select Modify Forums and Topics from the main Discussions page.
2. Click the subject name of the Forum to modify forum properties or create Release Conditions.
3. Click Add Topic to create a new topic for the forum.
4. Add the title, a description if you like, and select availability options.
5. Click Save to save your changes. The discussion forum will now appear on the main Discussions page.

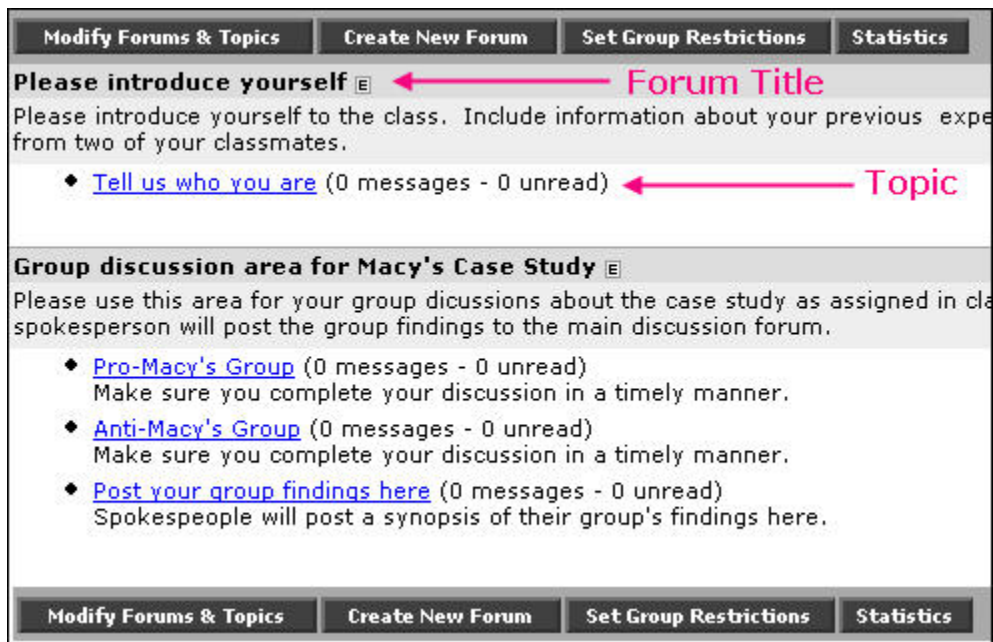


Figure 2 – Discussions Tool

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## New Message

1. Access Discussions by clicking on the Discussions link in the navigation bar or choose Discussion Messages in the Updates widget located on the course homepage.
2. Select the topic where you will create a new message.
3. Click Add Message.
4. Enter a subject and a message. You may use the html editor to compose your message or you can use html tags to format the message.
5. Click Submit to save your message and post it to the discussion topic.

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## Personal Settings

There are some features of the Discussions tool that can be changed on the individual user view.

1. Flag messages – Click the Flag Message button to add a red flag to a discussion message. This is useful if you need to mark messages to review or respond to later.
2. Reply: With message – Includes the text of the previous message in your reply. This resembles an email when seen on the screen. Please note that this preference is dependent upon the poster of the message. Inform your students if you would prefer they not use this feature.
3. Reply: Without Message – The text of the original message to which you are replying is not included in the reply.

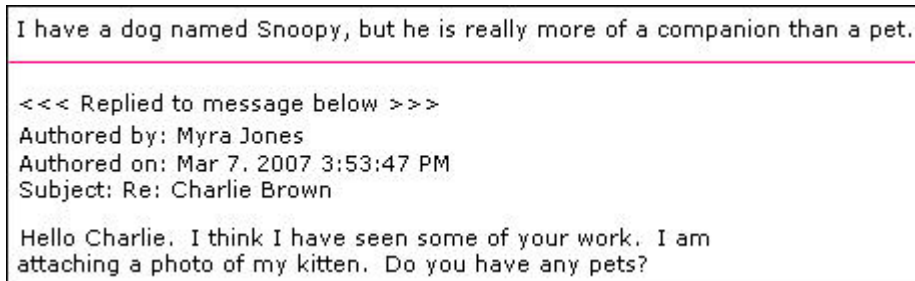


Figure 3 – Reply: With message

4. Display Options – Click the Display Options button for even more options. The defaults are shown below in Figure 17. Experiment with the settings to create a discussions view that is comfortable for you.

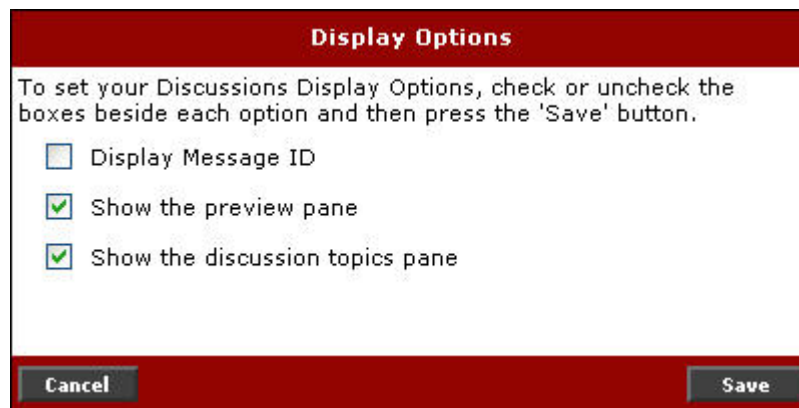


Figure 42 – Display Options

## Statistics

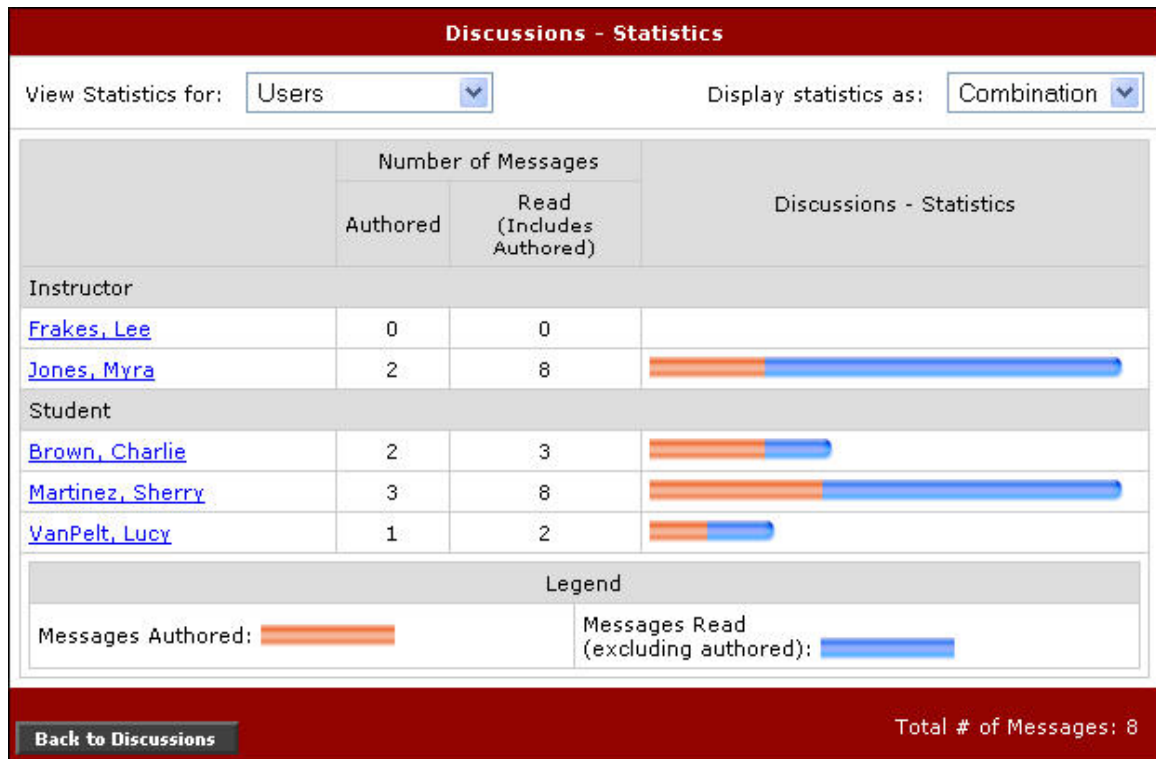


Figure 5 – Discussion Statistics